

# Bringing Patient Stories to YouTube: Violin MD

By Siobhan Deshauer, MD, FRCPC

Social media is strongly embedded in the fabric of society, giving rise to exciting opportunities to engage with patients and the general public on medical topics. Four years ago, I created a YouTube channel called “Violin MD,” which aims to bring viewers “behind the scenes” in the healthcare system and introduce them to health topics. The public interest has been overwhelming with over 57 million total views and 780K subscribers to date.



Visit Dr. Siobhan Deshauer's YouTube channel “Violin MD” at [www.youtube.com/c/ViolinMD](http://www.youtube.com/c/ViolinMD).

With the permission of McMaster University and the Hamilton hospitals, I began filming my journey as an internal medicine resident. Videos about being on-call and collaborations with allied health professionals have been popular; however, the missing piece in the narrative was the patient perspective. I began collaborating with patients who were interested in sharing their experience with rare and chronic conditions.

My first interview was with Doug, a previously healthy man who had worked in a sheriff's department before being diagnosed with granulomatosis with polyangiitis (GPA). Doug described his clinical presentation and how he maintains a positive outlook on life. His wife Dot, a retired nurse, emphasized the impact a chronic life-threatening disease can have on family members, and her fear of Doug having a relapse.

After the video was published Doug reflected on the experience of sharing his story publicly. “I must say that I stepped out of my comfort zone to participate in the video. However, after reading the several hundred comments by viewers, I am very happy with the decision to do the video, as many people were apparently positively impacted.” His rheumatologist also watched the video with interest and noticed a gap between Doug's perspective and the medical lens. “It becomes a more personal story... There are some elements that I didn't reflect on in our interviews as we focus more on the medical aspect of his treatment.”



Dr. Deshauer interviewing Doug, a patient. To view the video clip visit [youtu.be/pazegLX4ob0](http://youtu.be/pazegLX4ob0).

With 565 comments on the video to date, the public demonstrated empathy and awareness for those suffering with chronic illnesses, creating a community of patients, family members and health professionals. Many viewers identified with Doug and shared their personal stories with chronic illnesses. One 19-year-old shared his personal struggle, “I just found out I have a rare blood cancer... it's so hard not to know what your future holds... I'll definitely try to take on Doug's attitude of only focusing on what I can control.” Just as patients identified with Doug's story, one physician viewer wrote “I have never seen an actual patient with GPA. This helps me to understand the disease and the patient's perspective better.” And a medical student stated that it's “more impactful seeing the person behind the disease and hearing their story. It makes me want to study more!”

Creating videos and interacting with the public has benefitted me in ways I did not anticipate. Hearing a patient's story in the absence of time constraints and clinical decision making reminds me what it means to actively listen to a person—rather than a patient. The supportive comments I received after showing some emotional vulnerability reminds me that in the appropriate context, patients often want their doctors to express sincere emotions. My hope is that these videos play some small role in bridging the gap between medical experts and the general public.

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