



## Last Day in Residency

***I am a new Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation physician at Kaiser Permanente in San Diego. I recently finished my residency in Detroit, Michigan at Wayne State University. I thought that I would share a story of my last day in residency.***

A rehabilitation moment happened to me on Friday, my last day at Rehab. I was walking up the stairway at the Rehabilitation Institute on a very busy day. One of those days when you want everyone to get out of your way because you have so many important things to do. I had a lot on my mind as I ran up the stairs but not enough to stop me from noticing a father and his four-year-old daughter. She was a pretty girl with a pink striped dress with the obligatory minor amount of food stains that one would expect to see on a child who likes to visit carnivals and the such. However, this girl was special. She had a prosthetic right arm from her elbow down. I don't know how she lost her arm, possibly trauma, possibly a birth defect. All I could see was that where bone and muscle once was had been replaced by plastic and gears. Modern science has really failed to craft a cosmetic and functional upper extremity prostheses. This one was clearly functional with its electrically controlled claw and beige fleshtone. Some prosthetist must be very proud of this creation. However, the aesthetics left a lot to be desired.

I knew that this young girl was coming from the second-floor outpatient rehabilitation unit. She was learning how to use her man-made substitute for what

God had given and ultimately taken away from her. I stopped and thought for a moment, a thought that a rehabilitation physician might be more comfortable thinking about. This little girl will have little disability throughout her life. She will be able to take care of herself; however she would never be able to do things that are not rated on any contrived disability scale. She will never compete in a gymnastics event nor climb the face of Half-Dome in Yosemite. Not things that everyone would necessarily want to do, but she will never have the option. More importantly, I thought of how this girl will grow up with a socially induced impairment. Children can be very cruel to those who are different. Even more disheartening will be the social issues that this precious girl will have to endure. There will be the silence and nonrecognition delivered by the American public. We tend to see right past handicapped people in hope of avoiding eye contact. We are embarrassed in our lack of understanding and concern. I looked straight at the girl and told her how beautiful she was. How many fewer times will she hear this in life compared with her peers? She acknowledged my statement and continued walking down the stairs. One flight up I heard the girl say to her father, "That was a very nice man, daddy." After hearing that, I realized what physical medicine and rehabilitation has given to me. The ability to see disabled people as whole, and a better understanding of the human condition.❖

MICHAEL JAFFE, DO is a graduate of the Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine in Kirksville, Missouri, and is a practicing Psychiatrist for the Southern California Permanente Medical Group (SCPMG) in San Diego. He is an avid in-line skater, mountain biker, and snow boarder. He is currently being certified as a fitness and aerobics instructor.

