

If you can't add to the discussion, don't subtract by talking.

—Lois Wyse

Just Call Me the Narrator

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I have a few clinical colleagues who will invariably call me to discuss an exam that I've read (or occasionally one that a colleague has read).

When I see who's calling, I know exactly what I'm about to do: I'm about to read them my report.

You know what I mean. You looked at the study, put it together, likely pulled some info from the EMR, maybe checked a quick reference, and then put your words down as a permanent record. Your contribution to the medical record. Your enduring work product.

You likely did a great job: describing the findings, noting the related pertinent negatives and positives, embellishing it with some image numbers for reference, and then wrapping it with a bow in your impression—"Imaging findings compatible with a definitive entity."

It is perfect. You forgot nothing. It's like a textbook case, and your report is like a paragraph from the literature. Who would need more?

Oh, rest assured, someone does. And now your job is to be the "audio book" of your report.

You speak with them and find yourself reading lines from your report, maybe saying:

Yep, I said that. It's in the second paragraph of the findings. See it there on the report?

No, that wasn't found. I described that in the first paragraph. See it there?

Yes. That's what I think it is also; that is the first line in my impression. Do you see it?

Ever want to reach through the phone and pull them to you so you can read the report together? Point at your words as they ask questions?

I appreciate my role in the health care team. I would like to think I do a good job. I also like to think that my reports are pretty good.

My feeling is that some people prefer the verbal input. I'm not even sure some of them read a report at all—maybe their staff does.

What did they gain? Audio.

What did I gain? Hmmmm. I don't think I added to the discussion. I just hope I didn't subtract with all that talking.

I know one thing for sure—that's one less exam I will turn over today.

Keep doing that good work, my fellow narrators. Mahalo.