

CHICAGO TRIBUNE

July 06, 2012

http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-07-06/site/ct-prj-0708-local-book-club-20120706_1_patient-empathy-cultural-awareness

Reading for Empathy

Our story:

We are the Edward Hines Jr. Veterans Affairs Hospital Literature and Medicine Book Club. In 1997, a national reading and discussion program called Literature and Medicine: Humanities at the Heart of Health Care was created to help hospital staffs improve their interpersonal skills and increase their cultural awareness, empathy for patients and job satisfaction. It's in its second year at Hines VA Hospital.

What we read:

We meet to discuss literature that illuminates the patient experience and deepens personal awareness of our work. "The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down" by Anne Fadiman was an interesting discussion because it opened our eyes to the enormous cultural divide that can exist between patient and doctor.

Loved:

"Fourteen Stories: Doctors, Patients and Other Strangers" by Jay Baruch, "Another Country" by Mary Pipher, "The Knife Man" by Wendy Moore and "The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating" by Elisabeth Tova Bailey. We also liked "The Anatomy of Hope" by Jerome Groopman because it reminded us there is always hope. We have to help patients hold on to it.

Hated:

"A Farewell to Arms" by Ernest Hemingway. It was too wordy and dry.

Next up:

"Over My Head" by Claudia L. Osborn. This book is about a patient with traumatic brain injury and is relevant to our work with veterans' brain injuries.