



Comments from Participants

[O]ur discussions have significantly reordered how I think about medicine. I live with the experience of the protagonist in one of William Carlos Williams' Doctor Stories, a physician who acted without listening. I do not want to be like him. I am learning to sit quietly and listen.

Physician, Maine

I was really burned out when I started this and I did not realize I had some of the biases that I had. And I think the readings helped me get some of those behind me a little bit. And I think I am a better nurse now...I have my patience back and tolerance and a little better understanding of some people that I probably would have judged differently before.

Nurse, North Carolina

Both patients and providers are crying out for health care to become more humane...[T]his project can help to restore the heart and soul of health care that so many of us believe has been weakened.

Seminar participant, Maine

[I joined the program because I] had been working in the ER and felt like I had lost my own humanity; I wanted to relearn how to think and talk.

Nurse, Vermont

I am amazed by how differently we read these books. It makes me wonder how differently we hear our patients' stories. And how our patients perceive us.

Physician, Maine

[The seminars are important because they get] medical providers to the table – they have so little time for thought about the humanities. We (some of us) work in a culture where emotional expression is not encouraged.

Hospital Administrator, Massachusetts

This year again the literature dealt with the deepest issues of the human soul across cultures. To read the prose of great writers expands and nourishes us profoundly. To have an opportunity to discuss these works with others again takes us to the limitations of our own perspective.

Social Worker, Maine

The program really impacted my communication [particularly] the one reading about the little girl with epilepsy and how her family didn't understand it. They were from another country. We have a lot of Spanish and...Vietnamese people around us every day and it makes me wonder now, did they understand? I have changed how I approach them and their understanding of their care.

Nurse, North Carolina

I now think about what people are feeling when they approach my desk, and I am more conscious of the fact that I am the first person they speak to when they come to the hospital.

Hospital Receptionist, Maine

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Hospital Receptionist, Maine

I always knew my role [as a nurse] was valuable, but I think I more fully understand how far-reaching that can be. I have learned how important it is to listen to each individual, to hear what their need is and also to hear the needs of the extended family.

Nurse, Maine

A truly remarkable experience- it feels wonderful to come back to why I was attracted to medicine in the beginning and to share dialogue with others who care.

Seminar participant, Maine

The program] helped foster communication across the hierarchy of medical culture, which was great, and much needed.

Physician, Maine

I think it's valuable to have our relatively "safe" world turned upside down by really thinking about these issues that might not be part of our daily lives. Thank you for offering the program.

Dietician, Massachusetts

This has helped me see medical issues through other people's eyes; it has broadened my thinking and horizons.

Nurse, North Carolina

The project is very valuable. I have learned so much about human frailty and how we deal with it in our structured environment. I believe that this is important to everyone. I would like to see more of this throughout our industry.

Hospital Administrator, Maine

The program helps me reaffirm the need to attempt to bring a supportive healing attitude to my work area.

Nurse, Maine

[The seminars] provide a wonderful opportunity/ space to discuss attitudes, bias, assumptions, and various belief systems in a safe environment.

Education Director, Maine

I was really burned out and I was feeling like I was at the point of leaving oncology. And there was one story in particular [that we read in the program] about an AIDS patient and the doctor feeling like he had nothing to offer- sometimes we feel like we don't have anything to offer. That is how I felt ... I now feel connected and feel like I'm not so all alone- I really needed that. And I feel like this group has probably kept me in oncology. I have been able to share when I see others go through these burn out symptoms.

Nurse, North Carolina

The subject matter of the books we read, as well as the discussions that occurred, has often helped me personally in my hospital social work. Listening to other perspectives and interpretations of various topics helps be to be more empathetic to diverse points of view.

Social Worker, Maine