



The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing, And The Human Condition

By Arthur Kleinman

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Based on twenty years of clinical experience studying and treating chronic illness, a Harvard psychiatrist and anthropologist argues that diagnosing illness is an art tragically neglected by modern medical training, and presents a compelling case for bridging the gap between patient and doctor.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

A psychiatrist at Harvard Medical School, Kleinman vitalizes his book with quotations from patients and members of the healing professions. This is a scholarly study but accessible to a lay audience. Writing of "suffering, healing and the human condition," the author observes the dichotomy between technological advances in medicine and the actual treatment of the ill, handicapped and dying. Profoundly moving reports illuminate the deprived lives of social outcasts, shunned and stigmatized, whose needs are not met by the medical community. There are also instructive descriptions of how an empathetic doctor can help "humans" (not cases) to regain health or, in extremis, die a "good death." Kleinman argues persuasively the need to reform today's medical-care system to more fully serve humanity.

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From Library Journal

Kleinman, a psychiatrist at Harvard Medical School, pleads for doctors to consider psychological and social aspects of chronic illness along with the medical aspects. He points out a need for change in the education of physicians to reflect this broader view, also expressed by Melvin Konner in *Becoming a Doctor* (LJ 9/1/87). He presents case histories to illustrate the differing reactions of patients to their illnesses. A distinctive feature is a comparison of patients in the United States and China, making the effect of social elements on illness graphically clear. Recommended for the public and health care professionals. Anne Twitchell, EPA Headquarters Lib., Washington, D.C.

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