



## Medical College of Wisconsin Common Read

### Book Discussion Questions:

*Your Heart is the Size of Your Fist: A Doctor Reflects on Ten Years at a Refugee Clinic*

#### **CULTURAL**

Dr. Scholtens describes the importance teaching cultural humility rather than cultural competence on page 22. Could you speak to what it means for you to practice cultural humility in your work? (These could be stories of mistakes you've made, practices you've developed to continually learn from your patients, or how you approach a patient encounter).

Dr. Scholtens describes how the high-quality, unrestricted care and treatment refugees receive can help ease the stark transition from their home country to Canada making refugees and their families feel more integrated in their communities and facilitating their identification as Canadians. How can medicine help build a sense of community and identity?

Refugees must adjust to a new home and society that often dramatically differs from their past life. In a similar vein, many patients receive diagnoses and life changing treatments that leave them radically changed mentally, physically, emotionally. How can a physician talk to patients and their families about change to help those affected adjust to new situations, challenges, fears?

What resources have you used/how have you educated yourself to prepare to best serve populations coming from a multitude of differing cultural backgrounds and uniquely difficult circumstances?

#### **TRAUMA**

One of the themes Scholtens writes about with respect to refugee medicine is providing care for trauma and PTSD. Is this something you do often in your practice? And, if so, what resources, skills, and mindsets do you rely on to provide care to these patients? (Chapter 11 is an excellent chapter on the topic of trauma and advocating on behalf of patients. Yusef's story is covered on pp. 55-59, 81-83).

On pages 43-45, Dr. Scholtens addresses the importance of work-life balance and lists the philosophical and practical guidelines that she personally follows. Hearing the trauma of others can be taxing on your own mental well-being. How do you take care of your own mental health and integrate a work-life balance?

## **HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS AND POLICY**

In Chapter 11, Dr. Scholten talks about how the clinic lost federal funding for its trauma program, something that she describes as a “critical service” for the well-being of her patients. Is this side-lining of mental health resources something you have experienced in your practice?

Frustrated and concerned for the well-being of her patients, Dr. Scholten’s submitted an article to national newspapers, local newspapers, news blogs, and medical journals appealing for the re-instantiation of the trauma program, all to no avail. She describes how disheartening this rejection was since, evidently, there was a lack of public interest in this important issue. Have you experienced this sort of ignorance about the importance of refugee health? What are some common misconceptions about refugees?

In the book, Dr. Scholtens talks about numerous unexpected obstacles and challenges faced while attempting to provide excellent care to the refugee patients she was treating. Could you each speak to the unexpected obstacles and challenges you've faced in your own practice with refugee healthcare in America?

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

What themes or lessons have the refugee patients you’ve treated taught you over the years?

In the book Dr. Scholtens wrestles with the idea of how best to balance the patient-physician relationship in a way that is professional while acknowledging that each circumstance is unique. Do you find this to be an area of struggle in your own practice and if so please expound on how you manage these complexities.