

Selected student comments on the Chris Adrian reading:

I really enjoyed talking to Chris Adrian . . . [h]is answers really helped to connect the medical profession to the arts and humanities.

. . . the reading was quite intense and powerful...

It was inspiring and reminded me that it's ok to take time to pursue other passions; that their benefit does not exclude becoming a more whole physician.

. . . realizing that this author wrote and created while going through very difficult years of training (residency and fellowship) made me realize that I could do the same, whereas I would have thought that this was not an option. For him, writing might have deprived him of some much needed sleep, but also helped him keep his sanity by helping him cope better with some of the harsh realities of medical training and the medical world.

It gave me such an appreciation for the writing and how writing and the arts in general can inform clinical practice and enhance the experience of medicine.

Hearing the voice of the author bring his words to life in tone and cadence was surprisingly meaningful. I understand the story in a way I never could have otherwise.

I saw how your past experiences with medicine inform how you will practice medicine in the future. I also saw the importance of faith to health and well-being, specifically regarding end-of-life issues.

I particularly was touched by how he, sometimes subtly and sometimes overtly, connected what was happening in clinic and to his patients to events in his past or present personal life. It's a reality we all must grapple with, but all too often we are expected to be superhumans who leave any emotional baggage at the emergency room door.

The stream of consciousness that he presented showed some of the daily chaos that is very real in the field of medicine, providing a very raw and very personal approach to his emotions in his practice and history.

I really appreciated hearing him discuss the intersection between his professional life as a physician and his life as an artist. His honesty was refreshing. I truly valued his challenge to find a way to merge or continue the things you love.

I think it's important to maintain self-awareness in the medical field, knowing strengths and weaknesses and how our personal interests further inform relationships with patients beyond clinical care.

There was the obvious connection by subject, but the most interesting connection came with Chris Adrian's discussion of why he decided to enroll in the Harvard Divinity School. The training that religious officials undergo to care for their parishioners emphasizes the need to convey an immediate, genuine interest in the parishioner's problem. This is a skill that physicians also need.

This was an incredible story of the inner life of one physician intersecting with his outer medical world -- his colleagues, his patients. It was a nice reminder that all medical providers have their own mental and physical health issues that they are coping with at the same time that they are trying to take care of others, and how sometimes this is really a juggling act, and these can get intermingled, like when the protagonist is crying and doesn't know whether it's for his dead patient or his dead relationship.

The reading/discussion caused me to rethink what I deem excellent and why. I had a lengthy conversation with a colleague about the topic. The ability to translate great experiences into great works is what separates excellence from the every day. This is something I can certainly apply to my medical world.

The hospital environment, the intimate questions that are asked of patients, the act of fixing microscopic problems inside a patient's body are all things that seem normal from within the medical perspective, but are actually quite magical when viewed through Chris' lens.

I appreciated his use of storytelling as a tool of reflection, being especially helpful given the closeness in how we interact with people in the medical world.

We delve into the lives of others, and that connection requires an understanding of human nature and the human condition. Dr. Adrian encouraged all of us to not forget that we are humans interacting with humans. And that the person matters, not just the patient.