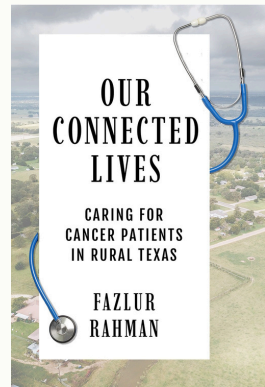




OUR CONNECTED LIVES

by Dr. Fazlur Rahman

Patient Profiles & The Central Themes They Illustrate



In **OUR CONNECTED LIVES**, Dr. Rahman shares the stories of five patients. These stories illuminate the humanity in all of us; reveal courage and resilience in the face of tragedy and setbacks; and show the inner workings of the cancer field. These patients represent cancer patients everywhere, for they all suffer and prevail in the same or similar ways, only some more and some less depending on their disease and their means and support.

Clara - Themes: Remission. Longevity beyond statistical expectations.

- Fighting cancer and surviving against all odds.
- Remissions and relapses are sometimes hard to predict.
- Doctors need to be open minded when talking to patients about their cancer, because they are not simply statistics, and their outcomes can vary widely.
- Doctors must watch for treatment induced harms.

Corina - Themes: History of breast cancer treatment—from radical mastectomy to lesser and lesser surgery to no surgery at all in select patients—and relapse after a long remission.

- What is considered a standard treatment today, can be obsolete tomorrow.
- Fighting cancer and continuing to have a daily life, including working and making a living, and helping others.
- Doctors' hubris can harm their patients.

J.D. - Themes: High price of cancer drugs and the dangers of altering/skipping dosage.

- The crushing costs of cancer drugs and being forced to decide between saving your own life or having enough money for your family to live on.
- Stopping or skipping medicines can result in tragic consequences: relapse of cancer, and then even more costly, painful and longer treatments.
- When choosing treatments, doctors need to weigh many factors, including affordability and the circumstances in which each patient lives.

Mrs. Cooper - Themes: Caring for the oldest old (85+ years) and considering their functional ability, not just their numerical age.

- The overall medical condition of patients must also be considered in deciding treatments.
- The 85+ years age-group, the oldest old, is the fastest growing population in the United States, and increasing numbers of them are battling cancer.
- Doctors must be prepared for rising medical, ethical and moral dilemmas when dealing with the cancers of the oldest old.

Juan - Themes: Quality of care varies at different hospitals, even in the same system—Veterans Administration, private, and public. How patients with “self-inflicted” medical conditions are perceived by medical professionals.

- Even when alcoholics and drug addicts have quit their unhealthy habits, medical professionals sometimes look at them with disdain to the detriment of care.
- Patients desire dignity in their medical care regardless of their past, present or station of life—the dignity that we all we want, rich or poor; doctors must remember that.

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