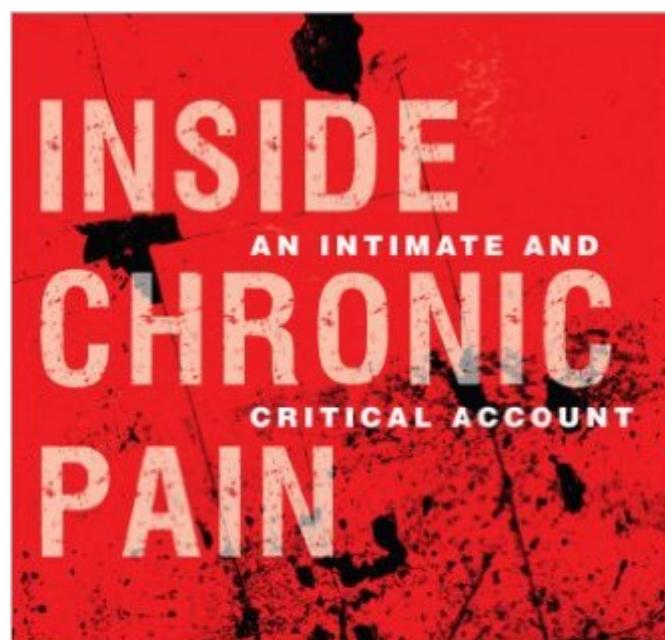


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Inside Chronic Pain: An Intimate And Critical Account (The Culture And Politics Of Health Care Work)



With a Clinical Commentary by
Scott M. Fishman, MD

Foreword by
David B. Morris



Synopsis

Chronic pain, which affects 70 million people in the United States alone-more than diabetes, cancer, and heart disease combined-is a major public health issue that remains poorly understood both within the health care system and by those closest to the people it afflicts. This book examines the experience of pain in ways that could significantly improve how patients and practitioners deal with pain. It is the first volume of a new collection of titles within the acclaimed Culture and Politics of Health Care Work series called *How Patients Think*, intended to give voice to the concerns of patients about their own medical care and the formulation of health policy. Since surviving a near-fatal car accident, Lous Heshusius has suffered from chronic pain for more than a decade, forcing her to give up her career as a professor of education. Inside Chronic Pain, based in part on the pain journal Heshusius keeps, is a stunning memoir of a life lived in constant pain as well as an insightful and often critical account of the inadequacies of the health care system-from physicians to hospitals and health insurance companies-to understand chronic pain and treat those who suffer from it. Through her own frequently frustrating experiences, she shows how health care providers often ignore, deny, or incorrectly treat chronic pain at immense cost to both the patient and the health care system. She also offers cogent suggestions on improving the quality and outcome of chronic pain care and management, using her encounters with exceptional medical professionals as models. Inside Chronic Pain deals with pain's dramatic and destructive effects on one's sense of self and identity. It chronicles the chaos that takes place, the paralyzing effect of severe pain, the changes in personality that ensue, and the corrosive effects of severe pain on the ability to attend to day-to-day tasks. It describes how one's social life falls apart and isolation takes over. It also relates moments of happiness and beauty and describes how rooting the self in the present is crucial in managing pain. A unique feature of Inside Chronic Pain is the clinical commentary by Dr. Scott M. Fishman, president of the American Pain Foundation. Fishman has long tried to improve the lives of patients like Heshusius. His medical perspective on her very human narrative will help physicians and other clinicians better understand and treat patients with chronic pain.

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Customer Reviews

It is rare that I have read a book that has truly changed my clinical practice. "Explain Pain" was one that changed my understanding of pain. "Inside Chronic Pain" has taken me far beyond this, to greater understanding of the person in pain. Had you asked me before reading this book if I felt I had a good understanding of the experiences of people in pain, I would have said yes. Had you asked me whether I thought I needed to change the way I listen to, and talk with people in pain, I would have said something like, "Of course, we can always learn to be better", though I would have wondered about how much better I could get at this. I know that sounds arrogant, but I felt I worked hard at these skills conscientiously. My answers to these questions would be very different now. After reading the book, I am listening to my patients in a new, more circumspect and even more compassionate way. I also find myself choosing different words now when explaining pain to people in pain. Words that relate to both the pain and the person. The changes I've experienced also extend into how I am teaching other health care professionals. The impact on those in recent courses can be summed up by the words of one participant, who told me that he has always been proud of treating the pain well, and now he knew he needed to treat the person in pain just as much. I don't think I would have been as successful in helping create this new view without the wisdom I gained reading Lous' narrative. All this is to say, please read this book. I hope you will share it with your patients, to help them realize they are not as alone as they feel. I hope you will share it with their families so they can grasp even more the impact of the pain on their loved-one's life.

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