

## THE COUNTRY DOCTOR REVISITED

“Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed an emergency department nurse crouched by [the patient’s] bedside, gripping his hand. Immediately impressed by her bedside manner, I paused with my paperwork to watch her. Moments later, a tear trailed from her lower lash to her trembling lip. My thoughts were interrupted by another staff person bellowing for morphine. The nurse mumbled something in response. When nobody reacted, she repeated more clearly, ‘He’s allergic to morphine.’ Surprised, everyone turned to her. ‘I know,’ she sighed, “because he’s my grandfather.”<sup>1</sup>

These sentences by Megan Wills Kullnat were among the first that I read in a new book called *The Country Doctor Revisited*. This book contains a collection of essays, short stories and poems written by care providers who have chosen to live and practice in the rural areas of this country. AgriWellness received copies of the book because our executive director, Mike Rosmann, has a short story included in the collection.

I was immediately drawn into this book. The editor, Therese Zink, has organized the reader into four sections, each of which contains a variety of reflections from medical personnel, behavioral health providers and students. The collection reflects the wide range of settings that are called rural, the diverse populations who live in those areas and the unique benefits and challenges that are part of the everyday lives of those professionals who make their homes in these areas.

More snippets:

“Sixteen years of practice in Belfast, Maine has made me a part of the wider community. I am linked to patients’ lives by more than the designation as their primary provider. There is a natural logic to it, as obvious and real as the stream that flows from Smith’s Millpond Bog to my home at the mouth of Belfast Bay.”<sup>2</sup> David Loxterkamp

“The calls and visits blindsides you. You will prepare and prepare, and you will never be,”<sup>3</sup> Michael Perry

“Two days earlier, I had looked proudly on the young men of the Cass Lake-Bena basketball team as they were welcomed home to the reservation following a successful state tournament. In the ER I found myself staring at young, Native men, all victims of the tragedy in Red Lake. My mind raced and my stomach curdled sour. Do I know this kid? Oh, no. Does he remember me?”<sup>4</sup> Erik Brodt

*The Country Doctor Revisited:  
A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Reader*

For more information or to order please visit:

[www.thecountrydoctorrevisited.com](http://www.thecountrydoctorrevisited.com)



[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

All providers are familiar with the term “dual relationships.” As all of the above reflections eloquently illustrate, dual relationships are far more than a medical ethics term in rural areas. Dual relationships are a very real part of providing care in these areas where the health care provider is an integral member of the community.

For those who live and work in these areas, the term “dual relationship” doesn’t begin to describe the health care provider’s relationship with the person sitting across the office. The person could also be her son’s soccer coach, his golf partner, the minister who officiated his wedding or the farmer who grows the food that helps feed her family.

This collection of stories answers the often-put question of, “why would you practice WAY out here?” The authors of these essays, in both moving and compelling ways, provide the answer. The essays also describe the unique challenges and difficulties that providers must deal with when providing care in isolated areas. These brilliant stories provide an overall picture of many of the elements of rural care. I consider this book a must-read for anyone, but especially for rural or urban health care providers.

<sup>1</sup> Kullnat, M.W.(2010). Boundaries. In T. Zink (Ed). The Country Doctor Revisited. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, p.8

<sup>2</sup> Loxterkamp, D. (2010). A View of Connectedness: From the Road to Beaver’s Farm. In T. Zink (Ed). The Country Doctor Revisited. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, p. 81.

<sup>3</sup> Perry, M. (2010). Call. In T. Zink (Ed). The Country Doctor Revisited. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, p. 124

<sup>4</sup> Brodt, E. (2010). Learning to Walk the Healer’s Path. In T. Zink (Ed). The Country Doctor Revisited. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, p. 127.

### **New AgriWellness Board Executive Committee**

The AgriWellness Board recently elected a slate of officers for the 2011 fiscal year.

*President:* Susan Helgeland, North Dakota  
*Vice President:* Marcie Moran, South Dakota  
*Treasurer:* Ron Swanson, Iowa  
*Secretary:* Margaret Van Ginkel, Iowa  
*Member at-large:* Linda Hessman, Kansas

We look forward to continuing the work of AgriWellness with these officers and thank the past officers for their dedicated service.