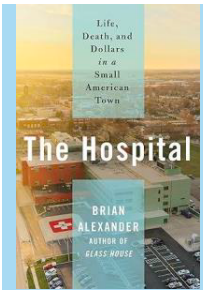
Discussion Guide



The Hospital
Brian Alexander

St Martin's Griffin/Macmillan
2022
320 pages
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Rural Health

Summary

Bryan, Ohio's hospital, is losing money, making it vulnerable to big health systems seeking domination and Phil Ennen, CEO, has been fighting to preserve its independence. Meanwhile, Bryan, a town of 8,500 people in Ohio's northwest corner, is still trying to recover from the Great Recession. As local leaders struggle to address the town's problems, and the hospital fights for its life amid a rapidly consolidating medical and hospital industry, a 39-year-old diabetic literally fights for his limbs, and a 55-year-old contractor lies dying in the emergency room. With these and other stories, Alexander strips away the wonkiness of policy to reveal Americans' struggle for health against a powerful system that's stacked against them.

Questions

1. Based on what you read in this book, how does a community hospital fit into the social fabric of a rural town?
2. The author writes about systems, structures, and history, but he interweaves these broader topics with profiles of individuals, such as patients and hospital employees. Which individual stories stood out to you and helped to humanize the broader issues?
3. How do you think the author built trust with the people he interviewed for the book?
4. Does trust—or mistrust—of the government, the health care system, or health information impact the way patients in this book utilize the hospital?
5. The Centers for Disease Control talk about the social determinants of health, which are non-medical, often systemic, factors that influence an individual's health outcomes and can lead to health inequities. What are examples of the social determinants of health that affected the hospital patients in this book?
6. The author utilizes the story of this hospital to talk about the health care business in America. How is health care like, and different from, other businesses?
7. A hospital needs money to operate. What do you think are the most ethical and sustainable sources for these funds?
8. The book's narrative concludes in 2020, with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. How do you think COVID-19 would have impacted this hospital?
9. The author situates the hospital's challenges in the wider context of the U.S. healthcare system. How do you think our healthcare system could be improved?
10. Do you think the U.S. should implement universal health coverage, where all Americans are assured of access to health care? What are the pros and cons of universal health coverage?
11. Does the author offer solutions in this book to the problems in U.S. health care? How would you describe the author's call to action?

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