In the Kingdom of the Sick: A Social History of Chronic Illness in America

Laurie Edwards
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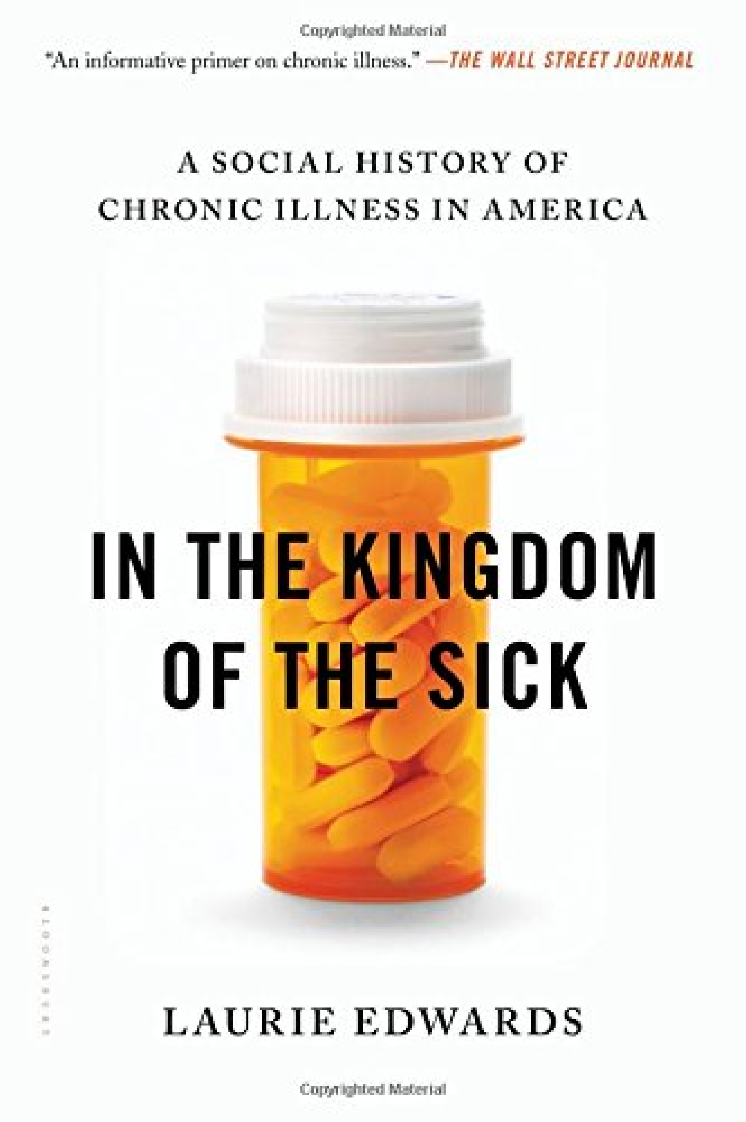

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Laurie Edwards : In the Kingdom of the Sick: A Social History of Chronic Illness in America before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised In the Kingdom of the Sick: A Social History of Chronic Illness in America:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Another Amazing Work by Laurie EdwardsBy Dan Dunlop, Healthcare MarketerEarlier this month I read Laurie Edwards stunning book - In the Kingdom of The Sick: A Social

History of Chronic Illness in America. Several weeks ago I read her first book Life Disrupted: Getting Real About Chronic Illness In Your Twenties and Thirties. The quality of the first book led me to the second, and I was not disappointed. (Note: I write this review knowing I can't do this book justice. The story Edwards tells is quite involved and incredibly well researched, so I recommend you read the book for yourself and write your own narrative in response.)In The Kingdom is a rant but the best kind of rant. Please know that I bring my own baggage and filters to my reading of the book, so that's just my reaction. Truthfully, you might not even notice that it is a rant because Edwards so skillfully weaves in an amazing account of the history of chronic disease in America. I can't imagine how much research went into putting the volume together. Edwards is the first person that I can remember quoting post-structuralist French philosopher and social theorist, Michel Foucault, since I was in graduate school! If this book were a website you'd say that it is "content rich." In many ways, it is a (much needed) history of women and chronic illness and it was fascinating. Whatever label you put on this text, it is powerful and engaging.As I looked upon this book, preparing to read it, I wasnt excited. Truthfully, diving into a two hundred-page book about chronic disease seemed like a chore; however, Edwards has penned a text that is enlightening, particularly for one who does not have a chronic disease or chronic illness or chronic condition (choose your language). And yes, the book and its themes are challenging. They force the reader to think about and challenge existing conventions. Throughout the book the reader is educated. Edwards teaches us. She covers a lot of expected ground like AIDS and the controversy over vaccines and autism, but she also journeys into other unexpected areas including the issue of pain and gender. She goes into detail discussing the bias in American medicine against treating women for pain due to the perception that their reaction to pain is more "hysterical" and not grounded in biology. You know the stereotype: men are more stoic and women are histrionic. (She then shares studies that point to the fact that the way women experience pain is actually different from the ways in which men experience pain.) Edwards account is memorable and important. To think of pain as a psychological weakness is to blame the individual for his or her experience with pain. That kind of thinking has been all too prevalent in the past.In reading Edwards work, you cant help but develop a better understanding of the dilemma facing people with chronic disease. As a society, when we dont understand an illness, we tend to blame the individual/patient. Historically, this has been the case with many in the medical profession, as well. We are far better at dealing with illnesses where there is a cure at the end of the rainbow. But with chronic illnesses, there is no end to the journey no immediate cure that comes with the diagnosis. And we have difficulty wrapping our minds around that. So often we blame the individual with the chronic condition, sometimes out of fear, and often out of misunderstanding. This has certainly been the case with AIDS, and has also been the case with illnesses like Fibromyalgia that are difficult to diagnose and where the diagnosis is often based on the presence of a variety of symptoms, rather than a definitive test or diagnostic procedure. Chronic Lyme disease and Fibromyalgia are both hotly debated diagnoses.I could go on and on. The lessons in this book are too numerous to recount here. Let me just say this: If you work in healthcare, you should read this book.2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Great book to understand the depth of chronic pain in the U.S.By RMDMy wife suffers from CRPS and has been getting progressively worse. The insurance industry is cutting back on covered medications that do the most good for patients and it is becoming more difficult to properly treat and help people with chronic pain. Something needs to be done to help those afflicted with pain and this book gives a good representation of the issues facing people in pain.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Excellent history of how we got here in health careBy Teresa EdwardsExcellent history of how we got here in health care. As an RN I found the social, political, advocacy history of health care fascinating. It really opened up my understanding of patient rights and the current health care system.

Thirty years ago, Susan Sontag famously wrote, Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship, in the kingdom of the well and the kingdom of the sick . . . Sooner or later each of us is obliged, at least for a spell, to identify ourselves as citizens of that other place. More than 133 million Americans now live with chronic illness, accounting for nearly three quarters of all health care dollars and untold pain, disability, and heartbreak. Patients with diseases as varied as HIV, cancer, or type 2 diabetes have been stigmatized, accused of causing their preventable illnesses through their lifestyle choices. People with irritable bowel syndrome and female patients with chronic fatigue syndrome have been told their symptoms were due to anxiety; and millions of people with chronic pain have faced skepticism from physicians and the public alike. What The Noonday Demon did for people suffering from depression, Laurie Edwards does for those who are chronically ill, championing their cause and giving voice to their lament.

From Booklist*Starred * The scariest revelation for anyone with a chronic illness is the realization that it isnt going to go away. Ever. Edwards, a health and science writer, recalls endless doctor and hospital visits when she was a child. As an adult with lung and autoimmune diseases, her visits continue. But she is not alone. According to Edwards, almost 130 million Americans suffer with some kind of chronic illness. Her book is a hybrid, a combination of research, literature, and personal stories from patients. Edwards addresses such important issues as the long-standing gender biases in the treatment and diagnosis of pain, how technology will change the doctor-patient relationship and empower patients, and the implications of what it means to be sick. She discusses what the ancients thought about the nature of disease, patient rights and medical ethics from the 1950s to the 70s, disability rights and the chronically ill, the womens health movement, the early HIVAIDS movement, chronic fatigue syndrome, prevention and the stigma of chronic disease, and chronic disease and health-care reform. An indispensable book for anyone with or concerned about chronic disease, and everyone interested in the health professions. --June Sawyers An informative primer on chronic illness. The Wall Street JournalAn indispensable book for anyone with or concerned about chronic disease, and everyone interested in the health professions. Booklist (starred review)A timely call to attention to a global health problem. Kirkus sWise, generous and a terrific storyteller. Publishers WeeklyAbout the AuthorLaurie Edwards teaches science writing at Northeastern University. She has several chronic illnesses and is a vocal proponent for chronic illness issues. Her blog www.achronicdose.com receives several thousand monthly visitors and is endorsed on 180 medical blogs. Edwards is the author of Life Disrupted: Getting Real About Chronic Illness in Your Twenties and Thirties, named one of 2008's Best Consumer Health Books by Library Journal. She lives outside Boston, Massachusetts.