QuaranThief of Joy: Pleasure Through Books During COVID-19

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Introduction

• The beginning of COVID-19 quarantining left UNM medical students with plenty of extra time on their hands. Students were then able to go back to old hobbies or take up new ones.

• It’s difficult for students to find the time to get through a book with scholarly duties and deadlines looming ahead.

• Students who love but miss reading for pleasure had time to delve into an alternate reality and immerse themselves in the serenity of a good book.

Background

• With an organized book club, students can enjoy escaping into a good book and/or they can discover new passions.

• Reading certain books may remind medical students of why they chose medicine as a career.

• Sharing books and discussing books with peers can build community and connection.

• Students who expressed interest either chose a book of their choice to read weekly and submit a reading reflection or participate in reading a selected book as a group to discuss later.

Goal

• To encourage peers to use their unexpected additional time to relax and read for pleasure.

Outcome

• A portion of students submitted weekly reading reflections.

• Other students participated in the selected book discussion through means of a group text.

• Students expressed appreciation for the push to read a new book during quarantine, underlining the value that reading can contribute to personal well-being.

• The book club even prompted discussion outside the realm of medical school among students.

Take Home Message

• Medical students can benefit from the comfort that reading provides.

• Implementation of book clubs may minimize isolation in students with common interests and can contribute to personal wellness.

• Future work to advance the medical school wellness curriculum may include monthly student-organized book clubs to continue leisurely reading in medical school and alleviate student burnout and stress.

Figure 1. Books that were read for pleasure during the COVID-19 wellness book club.