

Bioethics Book Club



Doctors and Friends

By Kimmerly Martin

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Summary¹

Kira, Hannah and Compton have been close friends since medical school. They reunite on annual basis for vacation. Shortly after meeting up in Spain, a pandemic breaks out, and Kira, who is an infectious disease doctor, quickly become one of the leading doctors in the American response to this deadly new virus. Soon she is facing a situation where she must decide which of her two children should receive an experimental, but potentially life-saving drug.

Hannah is an ob-gyn. She wants to have children of her own but struggles to conceive. However, just as the pandemic breaks out, she discovers she's pregnant.

Compton is an ER doctor in New York City. During the pandemic she experiences personal loss, which changes her life forever.

Also available as audiobook on Audible

Ethical Issues:

Public Health During Emergency

Professional boundaries

Trauma and Burnout

Experimental Drugs

Discussion questions:

- Knowing that this book was written before the outbreak of COVID, what stood out the most to you in this story?
- Which of the three characters could you relate the most to and why?
- Kira, Hannah and Compton all make sacrifices for their careers. Do you think they made the right choices?
- How did Kira's, Hannah's and Compton's personal lives complement or complicate their professional roles?

¹ Adapted from author's summary. [Doctors and Friends | LiveSite](#)

- What did you think of Kira's decision to use the experimental drug on her children?
- Why do you think she decided to administer it the way she did? Do you think her choice was ethical? Why/why not?

Discuss the following passages from the book:

Page 159: "I'm going to do the ultrasound myself," she said, enunciating behind her mask so they could understand her. That was one thing Hannah already missed, both as a doctor and as a patient: the ability to hear people clearly and see their faces as they spoke. You lost nuance without the full facial expressions. Hannah tried as best she could to convey empathy and concern and kindness with just her eyes, but it was difficult when you were shouting at people."

P. 255. Even in a non-plague era, a teenager caught sneaking around with the opposite sex against the explicit instructions of her parent didn't have a leg to stand on when it came to justification. But now? Now she risked not only her own health but the health of her mother and brother, and by extension, all the people with whom I worked."

P. 299. They tell me I need counselling. It's normal to feel traumatized at the site of trauma, they say, especially when you have to return to it over and over, "she said, mumbling into Baby Walter's hair. "All true. IN my case I find it more than a little ironic I work in a place that's literary called the trauma bay."

p.284. They're making an exception for any parent who has already survived infection, plus they know you understand infection control measures. You're not going to tear around like a dumbass and expose the staff. But" – his voice dropped – "if they let you in, you go in there to comfort your kids. You're not the one who should manage this. Mike and Gretchen know what they are doing, and they'll take care of your children as well as anyone in the country would. They know every single option available at this point. You have to let them take on the burden of whatever happens."