*A Never-Ending Battle*. NEJM. 2015;373:2399-2401.

*Old Soldier, Is It Like This*. JAMA.2016;315:135-136.

*The Soldier Responds*. JAMA.2016:315:136.

Story Telling can be deeply therapeutic for patients. Story Hearing can serve the same purpose for physicians. And empathy is the connection between telling and hearing. Empathy is the activity of the *hearer* that shows the *teller* he or she has been heard. Empathy requires action. It cannot simply be felt by the hearer; it must be expressed in some manner and reflected back to the teller, even if it is just the redolent silence that fills the space between patient and physician.

Hearing defines the physician-patient relationship, and never more so than when the story is deep and powerful. But the most deeply buried stories are often the ones most difficult to dig up. In preparation for this session, read the 3 essays. Think about how they affect you, and consider the following questions.

1. How did these stories affect your attitude about veterans?
2. Did reading these stories help you understand your patients at the VA or other sites?
3. Did reading these stories help you understand a family member or friend, veteran or otherwise?
4. Some folks would call this type of hearing being “in the moment.” In *A Never-ending Battle*, VJ reacts to Mr. M’s story in a particular way. Why was Mr. M willing to open up to VJ? What did you think of the way VJ handled the moment? What lessons can we can from VJ?
5. Do we dig up these stories, or do they uncover themselves?