

Review: John Kerr, *Don't Call a Doctor*, Veritas Publishing Company Pty. Ltd., Bullsbrook, WA, 1987

Pages: 124

Primum Nocere

An older, but shocking exposé of death and illness by medicine men, or iatrogeny. The author takes a common sense approach by lining up facts on: misdiagnoses; false positive patient presentations; so-called medical 'ethics'; surgical errors; and financial conflicts of interest.

The psychological aspect of 'doctor worship' is also fascinating; most in the West are happy to outsource their health decisions to a priest figure, even if the doctor may seriously harm or kill them!

Interestingly, there is an inverse relationship between a person's education level and trust in doctors.

A book to take to heart and avoid death or injury from a well-meaning 'doctor'.

Foreword (pp. i-ii)

I) What Happens to People Who Call Doctors (pp. 1-6)

Chloromycetin is given for bleeding gums.

“This book is aimed at destroying an illusion: The illusion that the medical profession as a whole is a race of super-beings – all knowing, all-powerful, infallible, self-sacrificing, wholly devoted to the service of mankind – stern but benevolent demi-gods whose actions and pronouncements must be accepted without question on matters of physical and mental health.”
[p. 5]

II) Band It Happens All The Time (pp. 7-12)

Dr David Spain: “Doctors rank close to bacteria as an important factor in the pathogenesis of human illness.” [p. 8]

10-15% of patients are in hospital because of iatrogeny.

Payment of doctors does not depend on results.

Dr John Doe, *The Healers*: “Of all who see a doctor, more than 75% would get well without any medical treatment whatsoever.” [p. 10]

Half the time doctors are incapable of making a correct diagnosis, therefore, only 12.5% of people benefit on average from them.

Seven in every eight who consult a doctor will be worse [either financially or physically] from the experience. [p. 11]

Doctors rely on drugs whose effects they don't understand, don't know the right treatment, and may be negligent.

III) What Drugs Can Do To You (pp. 13-20)

In 1956, German scientists created thalidomide (also Contergen and Distaval), tested ‘safe’ after using animals. It also causes irreversible peripheral neuritis and a wasting of muscular tissues in adult.

Anti-histamines can degenerate marrow.

Dr Frances O. Kelsey saved the U.S. from thalidomide.

Thalidomide is an hypnotic.

Dr Geffen: “[medical practitioners] tended to use excessive prescription of drugs as a method of terminating patient interviews.” [p. 18]

Doctors capture the fast buck with the quick prescription.

IV) If They Only Knew What Was Wrong With You (pp. 21-26)

Doctors only diagnose correctly as low as one in five.

V) How You Get the Treatment (pp. 27-36)

A typical GP knows not a whit more than when he completed his internship.

GPs don't read medical journals.

Propagandists adjure to have a medical checkup once a year.

VI) Negligence, Ignorance, and Incompetence (pp. 37-45)

A U.S. surgeon left *in situ* a 30" x 18" surgical towel.

A lady died from haemorrhage caused by a sponge left inside of her.

Surgeons remove the wrong fingers, arms, legs, and toes.

Mrs Gladys Steer, 33, died in minutes after being given the wrong blood type.

51-year-old Mr Riley died after surgical forceps were left in his stomach.

Anthony Hobbs, 6, died after a plastic surgical instrument was sewed up inside his stomach.

The Bachelor of Surgery is awarded without having done any surgery!

VII) Medical Ethics (pp. 46-55)

Doctors who will testify against other doctors are rare.

Medical ethics is described as a 'schoolboy code'.

It is a popular myth doctors take the Hippocratic Oath.

Res ipsa loquitur is accepted by the courts in cases of medical negligence.

In 1983, 16 malpractice claims were filed per 100 doctors.

Professional skill and moral fibre often go together.

VIII) More About Medical Ethics (pp. 56-68)

GPs realise they can become too unpopular by referring too many patients to expensive specialists, so try their hand at diagnosing complex cases they are qualified for.

A degree does not make a good surgeon or doctor.

Doctors hate courts.

IX) The Trouble With Heart and Other Organ Transplants (pp. 69-76)

Organ transplants increase cancer risk.

X) Status (pp. 77-86)

Cesare Lombroso: “The innocent man always adores what he cannot understand.”

Dr H. N. Merrington, G.P: “Quite often a Roman Catholic will call me ‘Father’ by a slip of the tongue. But it is only a slip of the tongue which indicates the regard in which they hold their doctor.” [p. 85]

XI) The Doctor Business (pp. 87-97)

Macquarie Street surgeons look at a patient and charge what they think his heart can stand. [p. 89]

A ‘split-fee’ arrangement is one in which the referring doctor presents at the operation as an ‘assistant’.

XII) Highlights From the History of Medicine (pp. 98-109)

During the 19thC, thousands of women were dying of puerperal fever after child birth.

Semmelweis died 47 as a pariah.

Andreas Vesalius (fl. 1514) catalogued 200 errors in Galen’s works.

In 1536, Ambroise Pare invented the tourniquet as an alternative to cauterising wounds with a hot iron, but he was scorned.

In 1628, William Harvey showed how blood was conducted through arteries.

“Doctors are by nature conservative. They provide a monopoly service, they are by training individualists, they occupy an over-exalted position in society, and their professional competence is not subject to review.” [p. 106]

XIII) Why There Is a No Need to Call a Doctor (pp. 110-120)

Major General Sir Robert McCarrison, research director on nutrition for the Indian Government found he could produce any ailment in animals by regulating their diet.

Medical practice is based on the germ theory.

Philosopher Immanuel Kant was contemptuous of doctors, and Nietzsche and Schopenhauer relied on *vis medicatrix naturae*.

Most illnesses are self-inflicted wounds from eating dangerous foods.