

I have a couple of minor criticisms of the work. In the glossary, general practice and family practice are used synonymously. The entry for general practitioner is “see family doctor.” While often appropriate, there are locales where “general practice” is not a “specialist trained to provide health care services for all individuals regardless of age, sex, or type of health problem...” Clarifying this distinction might be helpful for the uninitiated reader. While all “family physicians” are generalists, not all “general practitioners” are family doctors. Another point is that the orientation of the book is “top-down.” While appropriate for the intended audience that includes policy makers, it would have been nice to include the “bottom up” perspective; in the United States, the establishment of the specialty was largely a grassroots movement.

In conclusion, Dr Kidd and colleagues have produced a worthy successor. No mere rehash of the first edition, it builds upon the concepts introduced and takes them to the next level. This book belongs on the shelf of every family medicine educator, every policymaker, each student on a family medicine clerkship, and all practicing family doctors.

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**Twelve Patients: Life and Death at Bellevue Hospital**

Eric Manheimer

New York, Grand Central Publishing, 2012, 343 pp., \$26.99, hardcover.



A man incarcerated for life lies dying in the prison hospital. He is an illegal immigrant, a casualty of the three strikes law, and has only months to live from terminal cancer. The story of his illness and repeat offences spans decades and different countries.

Not many would be interested in his well-being or life's tale. However, the medical director of Bellevue Hospital, where prisoners from Rikers' Island go when

they are sick, feels there is a lot to learn from his story. He includes social commentary on our legal system, the complexity of becoming an outlaw, and the power of one person helping another to die with dignity. He writes too about helping this man go free so that he can die at home. This is just one of the 12 stories in this wonderful book.

Eric Manheimer, MD, examines the issues of medicine and health through the lives of 12 patients. He writes about his tenure as the medical director of the oldest public hospital in the United States. This extraordinary hospital takes care of the undocumented, United Nations diplomats, the homeless, and Wall Street financial moguls. In his stories, he elaborates on how each person came to New York and how they became ill over time; in this manner, he draws the reader in. For each patient he takes the “life history” that we all should take as caring clinicians. Through these anecdotes we learn about obesity, drug abuse, and immigrant health. Like Atul Gawande, he includes statistics and medical descriptions. However, he offers us so much more. He widens his lens to cover macro topics like narco trafficking and then focuses the microscope back on a former patient sharing his tragic life story at an AA meeting.

Manheimer is an *uber* doctor; he loves music, languages, historical events, and cultural foods. As a clinician, he notices the nuances within patient care: “The pauses in her comments told me more than what she had to say.” He is also a gifted writer. He has a way with words based on how experiences have transformed him. A cry of “keening” on the wards reminds him of the primal sounds of grief from Haiti years earlier: “There is no statute of limitations on what invades consciousness when the thrum of daily routine is drowned out by your own tachycardia and fears.”

I have never met a medical director like Manheimer. He finds a way to answer the question of what people truly need to seek wellness on their own terms. In “The Unloved Woman” he delves deep into a woman's past to find the violence not only done to her but to her ancestors. In “Tanisha” he works tirelessly to find a distant relative to take in this abused foster child.

Yet this is not simply a book of romanticized patient stories. Eric Manheimer was the medical director of one of the country's largest hospitals, with 26,000 inpatients each year. Somehow, he performs this role while caring

deeply about the toughest and sickest patients. He offers them care above and beyond the expected. The stories inspire all of us in medicine to look beyond budgets and hospital policy. He personally flies an undocumented patient back to Mexico. He believes that this man's last wish to die with his family and eat local ice cream must be met. Like in life, not all of his stories have happy endings. In "A Heart for Rabinal," after he works hard to secure a heart for an undocumented woman ("It seemed unfair and unethical to accept organs from undocumented immigrants and not allow them to receive"), her health takes a turn for the worse. In the story about the alcoholic, he battles his own feelings and frustrations while pondering the nature of forgiveness.

While this is a book about patients, Manheimer's own story may prove to shine the brightest. He includes his experiences with cancer and his near-death experience. He is

not afraid to offer his own vulnerabilities and personal story of the love of his wife. This is a book every medical learner should read and discuss. How else can one understand the complexity of the human spirit? Medical teachers could use single chapters to teach various topics. For example: the wrenching tale of parents having to let go of their child with severe psychological disease lest they undergo any more "emotional vampirism." We sit with them, we hear their torture, and we forgive them with the author. He does what we all need to do in medicine—listen intently, be curious, invite detail, be present, absorb, and reflect.

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