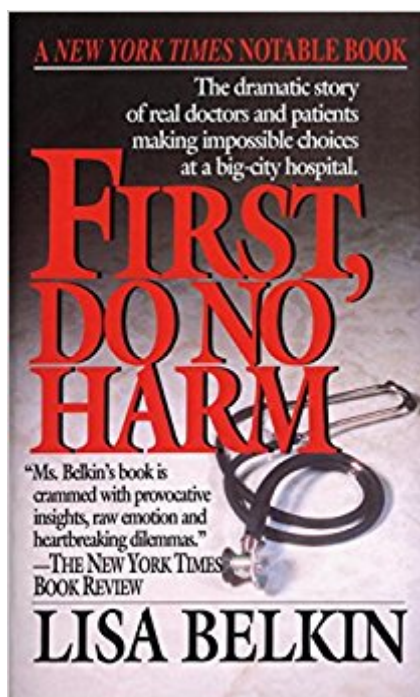


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First, Do No Harm: The Dramatic Story Of Real Doctors And Patients Making Impossible Choices At A Big-City Hospital



Synopsis

"A powerful, true story of life and death in a major metropolitan hospital...Harrowing... An important book."THE NEW YORK TIMESWhat is life worth? And what is a life worth living? At a time when America faces vital choices about the future of its health care, former NEW YORK TIMES correspondent Lisa Belkin takes a powerful and poignant look at the inner workings of Hermann Hospital in Houston, Texas, telling the remarkable, real-life stories of the doctors, patients, families, and hospital administrators who must ask--and ultimately answer--the most profound and heart-rending questions about life and death.

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Customer Reviews

In novelistic detail, Belkin examines the cases of several patients in a Houston hospital and the ethical considerations of their doctors. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc.

YA-- A look at medical ethics and the critical-care decisions made by the ethics committee, doctors, and four sets of patients/parents at Hermann Hospital in Texas between May-October 1988. Quality of life is measured against longevity and consideration is given to expenditure of limited resources. As most of these patients were children or young adults, the book has immediacy for high school students. The epilogue, written four years later, brings closure to decisions made. Young people interested in medicine or the health-care crisis are sure to find this involving.- Barbara Hawkins, Oakton High School, Fairfax, VACopyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to

the Audio Cassette edition.

Sure there is plenty of powerful content to praise, but first I want to celebrate author Lisa Belkin's fabulous writing style. She sure knows how to tell a gripping and compelling story. In the tradition of nonfiction writers who write like novelists such as Jon Krakauer (*Into Thin Air*) and Mark Bowden (*Black Hawk Down*) Belkin fuses top-notch reporting with authentic protagonist voices, brilliant insights, and the ability to surface root causes, map out trends, and distill the core philosophical issues at stake. Belkin applies these gifts to telling the story of the most wrenching life and death ethical dilemmas staff, doctors, nurses, and family members face at Hermann Hospital in Houston, Texas. Amazing advances in medical technology have forced all of us to confront questions never before encountered: when do we stop trying to keep someone alive? what is the definition of quality of life? who gets to decide -- the doctors or the family members? what is the difference between the law, ethics, and morals? how to best live with the decision once it's made? It takes courage to delve into these questions and to bear the responsibility for them as the ethics committee does at Hermann. It also took a great amount of bravery to offer journalist Belkin unrestricted access to the inner workings of the hospital and the committee. The result is a significantly important book that contributes in vital ways to the ongoing conversations we need to be having in society and among our families as technology puts us more in the position of having to make god-like decisions.

As a nurse these are issues we deal with all the time and then ask if we helped patients and their family's make the right decision. This certainly showed the ramifications of those decisions. WOW very thought provoking. Should be required reading for all med students and nurses. Highly recommend it

First, Do No Harm. Here we are, in August 2009, with a very heated battle going on in regards to the health insurance battle. People are worried about death panels, Nazi health care (we will be treating Nazis?), and a number of hysterical assumptions. Guess what! Death panels have existed under other names, or perhaps no names at all. Some hospitals call them Ethics Committees, when they are named. But if you are ever involved with the long-term care of someone who is critically ill, a birth defect, or a severe car accident, YOU become part of a death panel, like it or not. Through describing the life & death situations of a variety of patients, author Lisa Belkin educates us in an area a lot of what we don't want to admit to: we will all die, and someone other than ourselves could be making that decision as to when.

Good book to read if you are interested in the healthcare delivery subject. Very sad stories though! I had to read this for my ethics class, but I happened to be interested to finish reading the whole thing.

I highly recommend this book. It is a difficult book to put down. Written with amazing and factual insight into the decisions made every day at hospitals. It is an intellectual must read for people who believe there are "cut and dried" answers for patients. Lisa skillfully cut from one patient to the next, keeping you on the edge of your seat as she masterfully tells the story of each patient for whom ethical decisions had to be made. It may be eyeopening for some people to realize that when you or your loved one is hospitalized, all bets are off as to life and death decisions. You may find yourself at the mercy of the hospital ethics committee. Welcome to the world of modern medical science.

I am still reading this book and am thoroughly enjoying it. I am learning about the hospital environment and difficult decisions that are made every day about health care in this country. So far in the book, the backdrop is the highly regarded medical community of Houston, TX, and the history and case examples are so interesting. Whether you know someone in the medical profession, are in the medical profession yourself, or have just spent time in a hospital, this book should appeal to you.

I am a big fan of medical books, with all their stories about doctors and patients. My shelves are replete with them, including books by Frank Huyler and Jerome Groopman, Jerald Winakur and Atul Gawande, just to name a few. I love stories that humanize hospitals and their staff, and make us empathize and educate us on what goes on inside those walls. This book gets an A+ in that regard. Lisa Belkin divides her book up by months, and within those months we revisit certain patients to see their progress. We come to know and care about all of them - from the tiniest of premature babies, to those with devastating injuries and illnesses that foretell the bleakest of futures. But this book is more than just our empathizing with these patients and learning about their treatments, it's also about finding out how the medical staff deals with all this on a regular basis. It's not only the patients we come to know and care about in this book. In addition, there are fascinating chapters that take us inside the ethics committees that determine the future course of action for these patients, and let us know how the doctors determine when to proceed with procedures that may or may not help, and when the very real problems of hospital finances becomes intertwined with these

complicated decisions. I read this book in one sitting and it both moved me and educated me. Highly recommended.

Author Lisa Belkin did her research, in this riveting book. Many who enter the field of medicine do care about helping people; doctors do care about their patients and are frustrated by health insurance, legal concerns and concerns for the patient and their families. Based in a hospital in Houston, where Belkin did her research, you will not put down this book. You will feel new empathy for doctors who agonize over the end of life issues with patients and their families.

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