



Singular Intimacies: Becoming a Doctor at Bellevue

Danielle Ofri

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When Danielle Ofri enters the doors of New York's legendary Bellevue Hospital as a tentative medical student, she is plunged into the teeming world of urban medicine: mysterious illnesses, patients speaking any one of a dozen languages, overworked interns devising audacious strategies to cope with the intensity of a big-city hospital. In a facility where poverty and social strife are as much a part of the pathology as any microbe, it is the medical students and interns who are thrust into the searing intimacy that is the doctor-patient relationship. With each chapter, Ofri introduces us to a new medical crisis and a human being with an intricate and compelling history.

Singular Intimacies: Becoming a Doctor at Bellevue Details

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Author : Danielle Ofri

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From Reader Review Singular Intimacies: Becoming a Doctor at Bellevue for online ebook

Glenn says

Reading Danielle Ofri's "Singular Intimacies," there were two particular things that struck me. The first was the overwhelming doubt that seemed to track through the whole story—doubt about her abilities as a professional, doubt about her ability to reach out to her patients, and more general doubts about the ability of the medical profession itself to serve well those it was required to serve. We think of doctors as somehow above this; they are seen, I think, by most people as being almost "god-like," or if not quite god-like, then at least different than you and I. Perhaps not susceptible to the same mental quandaries as regular folk...

But "Singular Intimacies" puts the lie to that. Doctors both above and below Dr. Ofri's station make mistakes, miscommunicate, mis-diagnose...all in the course of a normal day. And yet, with her keen observers sense, Dr. Ofri sees that despite that doubt, and despite her own flaws which she delineates mercilessly, doctors continue to heal, to deal with the awful realities of failure, and to learn, despite working in conditions that would shatter most of us.

And how? This was the other thing that struck me reading this book. When a person trains to be a soldier, one of the things that is remarked upon is how they are drilled, drilled, drilled, over and over again...until every task, every motion is more than automatic, more like embedded. Working 36 hour shifts, in a more-or-less permanent state of sleep-deprivation, under incomprehensible stress...how could a doctor achieve any meaningful results if their tasks, their life-saving tasks were not eventually as automatic as a soldier turning in formation, loading a gun under attack, finding order in the midst of the chaos of battle?

"Singular Intimacies" follows one extraordinary physician as she struggles to find a way to heal—her patients, her co-workers, herself. And in the end, despite the book's portrayal of failures and doubts and devastation, there is a sense of coming to terms with the limitations placed upon those that must heal all others, while still finding space to heal themselves.

Jennifer says

Ughhh, Danielle Ofri is such a ridiculously talented writer. I think the institution of medicine instills in physicians a kind of public unshakeability, in that they always have to outwardly portray this demeanor of coolheaded authority. (This is something especially patent in the works of Oliver Sacks and Jerome Groopman.) But Ofri writes in a such a way that you viscerally feel her bumps and bruises along the medical training pathway, but you also don't lose your respect for her. There were some truly evocative pieces in here that spoke to the vulnerability of the profession - my favorites were the ones that ended kind of uncertainly, the ones with less than happy codas. The miserable mercury ball night at the OB-GYN witnessing the hysterectomy was gutwrenchingly evocative, and I've taught "Intensive Cure" a couple of times in classes because I'm so continuously dazzled by its twists.

Jennifer says

The author had a very engaging writing style - I actually felt emotional after reading some chapters.
Interesting clinical scenarios!

Lane says

Good look at the brutality at medical training both emotionally and physically.

Liz says

Interesting read. The author is clearly a right-brain thinker as well as a left brain physician, so it was interesting both how she interpreted her experiences and also how she told them.

Julie Whelan says

I read this right after reading Final Exam: reflections of a surgeon by Pauline Chen. It's a different style of looking at the learning and practice of medicine told by giving stories revolving around individual patients. As a medical librarian, I appreciate that it's another well written insight into what my medical students are going through. The beginning about the scary step of jumping into the hospital wards as a third year student is very memorable.

Jude says

The book is well-written and contains "snapshots" of patients the author treated when she was learning to become a doctor.

Jenni Ogden says

Danielle is a wonderful communicator of medical mysteries to lay people. Her stories of her patients and her experiences as a doctor are full of humanity and caring. If only every doctor was like her!

Jess says

wonderful.
collection of short stories about being a physician and training - better look into the life a doctor than any book i have read.

Chanpheng says

Incredible book about becoming a doctor at Bellevue Hospital in NYC. Reminds me of my student days, being afraid of attendings while learning how to think for myself. The author later returned to work at Bellevue and started up the *Bellevue Literary Review*, where anyone involved in medicine can submit pieces about their frustrations or wonders with medicine.

Ann says

Ofri's account of becoming a Dr. at Bellevue is fascinating. From learning to tell a patient she is HIV positive, to watching a patient die unexpectedly from unknown causes, to trying to get an IV into an IV drug user, Ofri describes her journey from intern to physician. I learned about the workings of a large inner city hospital, and this differed quite a bit from books on similar subjects like *_Hospital_* by Julie Salamon. What stood out here, in contrast with Salamon's book, is Ofri's voice and personal commitment to each of her patients. Salamon is trying to give a big picture look at the workings of a complex inner city hospital of many nationalities; the diversity that Ofri describes is highlighted through individual human stories.

Jill says

I really enjoyed this book! I thought that the stories were interesting, not only because of the unique medical challenges, but mostly because of the individual's stories. I also really enjoyed that the author shared her perspective/feelings/etc about her experiences.

Julie says

In a series of expressive short essays, Dr. Danielle Ofri chronicles her ten years of medical training, as a student, intern, and resident, at Bellevue Hospital Center, the oldest public hospital in the country. A thoughtful practitioner, Ofri is adept at capturing the complexities of modern medical practice. One standout essay finds her questioning the tenets of her medical training when a friend suddenly passes away. Ofri's stories offer a realistic portrait of a physician's life.

Serena says

Working in the infamous New York Bellvue Hospital, in the Psych ER no less is a harrowing experience. Dr Ofri's narrative combines the incredible compassion that it takes to work there, a bit of the danger and fear, and a huge amount of the frustration at the administation of the hospital, and the state of health care in America. I read the book as a person with bipolar, who has come to an ER in crisis. But I am a very educated patient , so I could also see clearly from the clinicians point of view. The frustration of giving someone meds they will never take. But also knowing the deadening those meds can cause. Wishing someone could just make it through just a few more days, knowing that their depression will lift, but also knowing the sheer hopelessness of true despair. A ER doctor is a hard job. A psychiatric ER doctor seems almost impossible.

Alison says

Ofri is a good writer. She captures the essence of medical training....you fumble your way through, not sure you are learning anything until you come out on the other side and realize you do in fact know something! Some parts made me laugh because even if I didn't have that exact experience, I had an experience like it. (Searching madly for the stool developer while the intern night float, only to return and find out mid-rectal exam that her patient has passed away. Then trying to figure out exactly how to declare someone dead--should be straight forward, right?)
