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Last Night In The OR: A Transplant Surgeon's Odyssey



Synopsis

The 1980s marked a revolution in the field of organ transplants, and Bud Shaw, MD, who studied under Tom Starzl in Pittsburgh, was on the front lines. Now retired from active practice, Dr. Shaw relays gripping moments of anguish and elation, frustration and reward, despair and hope in his struggle to save patients. He reveals harshly intimate moments of his medical career: telling a patient's husband that his wife has died during surgery; struggling to complete a 20-hour operation as mental and physical exhaustion inch closer and closer; and flying to retrieve a donor organ while the patient waits in the operating room. Within these more emotionally charged vignettes are quieter ones, too, like growing up in rural Ohio and being awakened late at night by footsteps in the hall as his father, also a surgeon, slipped out of the house to attend to a patient in the ER.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 8 hours and 21 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Tantor Audio

Audible.com Release Date: September 29, 2015

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B015XESSHO

Best Sellers Rank: #3 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Diseases & Physical Ailments > Organ Transplants #3 in Books > Medical Books > Medicine > Surgery > Transplants #154 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Science > Medicine

Customer Reviews

I am not a literary critic however i have been a nurse for over 40 years and I have worked with Dr. Shaw for over 30 of those years. From a healthcare prospective, when I read the patient stories , Bud makes it feel like you are IN the story. They are very realistische and meaningful narratives about what we live through and with on a daily basis. I find it very interesting how he interspersed his personal life stories with those stories in his hospital/work life. For those of us who spent hours working with Bud we had little idea of his personal struggles - we didn't see that in the OR or on rounds or in our day to day work. For those critics who think Bud might be "egotistical" I would say it takes some ego/self confidence to care for critically ill patients and fight every day to make them

better. There are not many transplant surgeons in this country or world who are as smart and thoughtful as Bud. IF there was a struggle or problem - you would want BUd in the OR with you. He is creative, smart, thinks on his feet and is all about the patient and family. We all know that medicine/surgery cannot "fix" everyone, and on the cutting edge of transplant, Bud did everything he could to help patients/families and advance the science of transplantation. He was involved with teaching multitudes of future transplant surgeons and physicians. I didn't know Bud when he met Ellen and her family, however I have witnessed him in countless situations where things are not going well and he was incredibly kind, thoughtful and compassionate. At the reunions no one knew about his hesitations or anxieties. The patients and families ALL wanted to have his ear for just a moment to thank him for all he did and that was a lot of people. Bottom line - he is a human like each and every one of us. For those who want to cast stone I would ask you to try to walk in his shoes for just one moment and remeber - he is one fine, talented incredible human being.

Dr. Shaw has shown that he is equally adept with pen or scalpel with this memoir. He has managed to ignore the ego boosting accolades which grateful patients and admiring colleagues often thrust upon physicians and give a remarkably candid account of his development as a surgeon pioneering a radically new procedure. His writing is vividly descriptive and has an undercurrent of dark humor and self deprecation. Each chapter is a brief essay of a significant moment in his life and the book is not arranged chronologically which allows it to be enjoyed piecemeal if the episodes become too intense. Those who are familiar with today's regulated medical climate will be shocked to learn liver transplants were once considered immoral and that doctors were once allowed to smoke in their lounge. I think the book is worthwhile to any non medical reader as well because of the honesty shown by the writer in exploring the influences which shaped his life.

Bud Shaw opens the door to his life wide open. He shares his personal life along with his stellar professional career. The sacrifices transplant surgery demands is unforgiving, it takes a different breed altogether to take on this intense speciality, only an elite few possess the skill, talent required and even fewer can handle the grueling demands mentally, physically, emotionally, their personal life, family and loved ones put through tests as well. A naked glimpse into the making of a transplant surgeon. Shaw's story is nothing short of candid. He tells of his entry into medicine, his awkward learning curve, the politics, near firings, mistakes, yes, he shares himself openly, appears nothing is held back. His also reflects on his childhood with stories of his family and his boyhood losses and shenanigans. A comprehensive overview of his career and personal struggles and successes is

presented. If you've ever wanted to walk in the shoes of a transplant surgeon privy to what transpires behind the curtain this story will appeal to you as well as a strained personal life filled with numerous ups and downs, health scares and tragedy. Enlightening, educational and raw. I respect Shaw for opening himself up to show his human side and not just the role of esteemed clinician. I have a better understanding of a physician's ego, power trip, need for adrenaline, and of course God complex. Such intimate and honest insight explains so much about the role, life and behaviors of physicians. Extremely interesting, fascinating to say the least.

Outstanding read. As a surgeon who trained in Dr. Shaw's era, I know the incredible personal sacrifices he had to make to reach the pinnacle of transplant surgery in this country. I understand how close transplant surgeons come to playing God, saving and losing lives every single day. Now Dr. Shaw puts his experiences in excellent prose so the public can get a look into his unique world. Transplant surgeons are not ordinary surgeons. They are a unique breed. This is a unique book by an extraordinary individual.

Great collection of vignettes from the life of a surgeon. His career encompassed the beginnings of transplant surgery to its present fairly sophisticated state and the stories and characters are fascinating. Even better though are his musings in the last third of the book. Very touching and honest. I hope he writes more

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