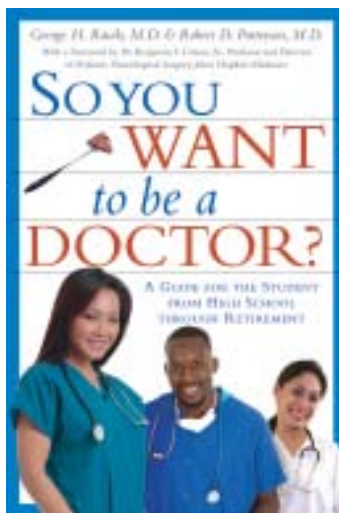


So You Want to Be a Doctor?

George H. Rawls, MD &
Robert D. Patterson, MD;
Hilton Publishing Co., 2007;
ISBN 0-9764443-3-X; 164
pages; \$16.95

One of the most difficult tasks we are faced with is to be all things to all people. This concise book offers itself as “a guide for the student from high school through retirement.” Incredibly, it is all that and much more. Drs. George H. Rawls, Robert D. Patterson and their contributors have interspersed their personal narratives with concrete suggestions and advice to achieve success at every level throughout a medical career and after. The book contains material helpful for students of all descriptions but is especially pertinent for African-American and other minority students.

The book is organized into four sections that consider: 1) The Road to the MD; 2) Reflections of Students, Residents and other Physicians; 3) Being a Doctor; and 4) Social Issues and Solutions. A usual limitation of a book of this size is the inability to deal in depth with issues and offer alternative suggestions for complex issues. This book is enhanced by the judicious use of the personal narrative of the contributors. These narratives lend an almost conversational style that should appeal especially to young readers. The material presented is very well covered and offers a roadmap to success for students at all levels. Especially compelling was the chapter by Patterson entitled “Overcoming Obstacles.” Patterson describes confronting academic difficulties by self-assessment and development of a realistic plan of action. The lessons learned by Patterson are given in plain talk and are important for all those attempting to master new knowledge. While overtly geared to the student in aca-



demically difficult, this essay should be required reading for all who are about to become engaged in any new academic pursuit.

There are many books intended for those interested in pursuit of a medical degree, and most are more similar than distinct. Few pay attention to the family issues of physicians or to the special status of women as medical students and as physicians that are extremely well covered here. It's very fitting that the related sections were authored by Bettye-Jo Elvan Rawls Lloyd, MD, and Lula P. Rawls, daughter and wife of Rawls.

Rawls is the overarching presence throughout the book. His narrative interspersed with his personal wisdom gives cohesion and single-mindedness to the project. As a vital mentor in his community, he speaks with the wisdom earned in decades of clinical and academic practice and in medical administration. The format of the book, which identifies the highlights of each chapter and is called “In a nutshell,” stresses points considered most vital. The reader may quibble with specific points (the argument for affirmative action is moot in public California programs, where it is forbidden by law). Taken as a whole, the book contains much to motivate students—especially minority students—to seek and succeed in med-

ical education. The other group very likely to benefit from this fine text is those who mentor those students. The book is well worth the money!

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On Grief and Grieving: Finding the meaning of grief through the five stages of loss

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and
David Kessler. New York,
NY: Scribner, 2005; ISBN: 07-
4326628-5; 235 pages; \$14

This self-help book by two well-known authorities on death and dying aims to help those understand the complexity of grief after the loss of a loved one in a straightforward way. The book opens with the preface “I am done,” in which coauthor David Kessler describes events surrounding the final days of his beloved friend and coauthor, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross. He recounts the conversation in which Kübler-Ross said those three words and made the statement, “Listen to the dying.” This story was fitting, as the introduction tells of anticipatory grief. The authors explain that we, as humans, are the only species aware of our loved one's or our own inevitable death, and anxiety occurs due to this. It tells of how grief precedes death, such as when a loved one has a lengthy illness. This type of grief, anticipatory grief, is described as more silent than the grief after the loss of a loved one. The coauthors point out there is no time limit on anticipatory grief, and for many, it is a prelude to the grief after a loss. Despite the authors having decades of experience with death, dying and the grieving process, they managed to present this topic from a very per-

sonal perspective and free of confusing medical terminology.

The authors organize the book first by describing the five stages of grief—denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance—as the process by which we cope with a loss. They reiterate that a person does not follow a linear path from denial to acceptance but may shift from one stage back to a previous stage at any time. The authors also state there is no timeline for each stage of grief and that grief is an individual process. Descriptive scenes and events of people experiencing each of the five stages of grief are interwoven throughout this chapter and can give validation to a reader on his or her own journey of grief. With the final stage of acceptance, Kübler-Ross and Kessler stress, “Acceptance is often confused with the notion of being all right or okay with what has happened. This is not the case. Most people don’t ever feel okay or all right about the loss of a loved one. This stage is about accepting the reality that our loved one is physically gone and recognizing that this new reality is the permanent reality” (pp. 24–25).

The inner and outer manifestations of grief are described next. The inner manifestations are described as one’s personal feelings and meaning of their loss and how they cope with it. These manifestations are not time dependent and do not follow a pattern. Inner manifestations can range from relief, to regrets, to feeling at

fault or to resentment. The authors point out there are numerous means by which our psyche manages emotional overload when we grieve. On the other hand, outer manifestations of grief are the actions, customs and rituals we do to commemorate the life of a loved one. Sometimes, there is a level of unawareness manifesting itself into our daily lives. For example, we may display some irritability or appear to be easily distracted on the anniversary of a death or a birthday. We then realize the significance of that particular day and understand what we were previously unaware of.

Kübler-Ross and Kessler continue, describing the process of grief following special circumstances such as multiple losses, loss of children, suicide, disasters, sudden death and Alzheimer’s disease. As a future child and adolescent psychiatrist, I found the topic of grieving children very relevant. It gives examples of how children are often “forgotten grievers” as adults often find it too painful to explain death to children or feel as if they should shield them from the overwhelming emotions of grief. The authors made an excellent statement regarding children experiencing the loss of a loved one—“Children are old enough to grieve if they are old enough to love” (p. 160).

This book closes with a challenge that society change how grief is viewed. It is re-emphasized that grief is a process of life and that this process leads to healing. Once

the healing process begins, one can learn to live without being in emotional pain. The coauthors shared their own personal experiences with grief and how they came to understand themselves better and the many people they encountered along their journeys.

On Grief and Grieving, in my opinion, is a book that was well written in a thoughtful manner to reach audiences of diverse educational backgrounds. This book appeals to anyone going through the process of grieving and to anyone who knows someone who may be grieving. It gives insight into the process of grief and dispels some of its misconceptions. In a profession where time limits are put on a person’s emotional pain, it is refreshing to be able recommend this book and know a patient can possibly feel less guilty about their individual grieving process. *On Grief and Grieving* would also be a valuable tool for primary care physicians to recommend to patients. I highly recommend this book, and I am thankful that I had the opportunity to review it.

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