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Buddha in the Waiting Room: Lessons I Learned from My Patients
Paul Brenner
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For many years in this country, medical doctors were considered demi-gods who could do no wrong. After more than forty years specializing in obstetrics and gynecology, the author has written a memoir reminiscent of Abraham Verghese's *In My Own Country*. While Verghese paired Eastern and Western thought in his medical practice, Brenner had to unlearn information disseminated in American medical schools. This book is the result of that process and should be required reading for pre-med students.

Brenner credits a trip to Guatemala and the women's movement with opening the doors that allowed him to experiment with alternative therapies like acupuncture and the mind-body connection. His interests and ideas were considered radical by his practice partners, but the results were undeniably effective. His newfound interest in trusting the need for change, both personally and professionally, led to the end of his marriage.

The author's journey "in search of the medical holy grail: what makes people sick and what makes people well?" has taken him through a doctorate in philosophy, counseling the dying, an American Cancer fellowship, and the holistic health movement. He has spent time working with hypnosis, acupuncture, meditation, and shamanism.

Brenner is still haunted by his arrogance and lack of sensitivity as a young doctor. He tells a heartbreaking story of a twenty-six-year-old whom he saved from cancer by surgery, only to lose her, six years later, to suicide. He credits her with having "taught me that the quantum of one's existence, the length of time we live, is inconsequential compared to the quality of life itself."

Wise doctors listen to their patients, according to Brenner, because a patient, if given the opportunity, understands his or her needs. Using examples from his work, the author argues that with trust, patients will communicate what's best for them and can have a better quality of life, death, and medical care. Buddha in the Waiting Room is memorable for its heart, wisdom, and

humor. Brenner's honesty and self-deprecation remain with the reader.

Pam Kingsbury