

Caught in the Crosshairs of American Healthcare

Lloyd I. Sederer

Greenleaf Book Group Press

(208pp)

979-888645129-0

Caught in the Crosshairs of American Healthcare is a thrilling case study in fighting systemic flaws to make medical facilities available to all.

Grounded in personal experience, Lloyd I. Sederer's inspiring social science book *Caught in the Crosshairs of American Healthcare* recounts how determined leaders saved the imperiled McLean Hospital outside of Boston.

McLean Hospital opened in 1819 as an asylum and built a solid reputation among those seeking psychiatric help or help with addiction. In its two-hundred-year history, it became a "haven for poets and movie stars, for Harvard and MIT professors and students, and for Mayflower descendants," as well as a Harvard Medical School teaching hospital. In time, it was reputed to be harder to get into than Harvard. Financial woes followed, and it was slated for either closure or sale. To save it from ruin, a small group came together to implement drastic changes in hopes of saving it. They worked to restore its clinical capabilities, its name, and its financial standing. Under their guidance, it became a facility for everyone, regardless of socioeconomic status.

In addition to its compelling focus on McLean's restoration, the book takes a broad look at how health care in the US became broken, inequitable, and corporate focused, putting profits ahead of the welfare of patients. Indeed, McLean functions as a microcosm of these systemic issues. Sederer shows how managed care deprived doctors and hospitals of the ability to make clinical decisions, created countless insurance hurdles for patients, and slashed payments for health care providers including McLean, putting them in a financial bind. And in addition to naming such issues, the book pitches practical solutions, including clinical models of care supported by research. Some of its recommended approaches worked when it came to turning around the situation at McLean.

Memoir elements run alongside this engaging story of fighting bureaucratic forces; Sederer recalls being "fueled by black coffee and a banana" in the course of the fight and provides details about McLean's impressive 246-acre campus to enliven the atmosphere. The book's literary flourishes help when it comes to holding attention, though they also involve some clichés, as of being followed by issues that are "like dark clouds." And it builds to a hopeful climactic point where the hospital rebounds on the clinical, research, training, and financial fronts—in effect, lifted from the medical field's "endangered species list." Its closing reflections are contemplative, bringing its underdog story back into the realm of the personal: Sederer discusses his time at the hospital and summarizes the lessons he learned.

A case study in combating systemic issues, *Caught in the Crosshairs of American Healthcare* is an uplifting account of fighting hostile corporate forces to save a historic psychiatric hospital from closure.

JOSEPH S. PETE (January 2, 2024)

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