

## Nothing Good Happens at...The Baby Hospital: The Strange, Silly World of Pediatric Brain Surgery

**Daniel Fulkerson**

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*Nothing Good Happens at ... the Baby Hospital offers all of the fast-paced drama and intriguing side-stories of a medical television series.*

"Neurosurgery is a roller coaster of emotion, especially when treating children," writes Daniel Fulkerson in *Nothing Good Happens at ... the Baby Hospital: The Strange, Silly World of Pediatric Brain Surgery*. Fulkerson's engaging memoir is a romp through a high-stress profession that also happens to be filled with joy.

The book's title comes from a warning statement made by the head of Fulkerson's neurosurgical residency program—and he wasn't kidding. Fulkerson paints a clear picture of the intense drama that plays out every day in hospitals dedicated to saving the lives of the most seriously ill children. He also tells the stories of the odd characters, egomaniacs, and geniuses who study for eighteen years to become board-certified neurosurgeons, and of the amazing children who make their efforts so worthwhile. Working at the baby hospital, Fulkerson shows, "forces you to ask about Death and heaven and God." He also shows that there are no guarantees that the answers to such questions will be revealed.

The book also goes beyond the walls of the baby hospital, taking on the state of medicine today with appropriate anger and frustration. It shows that lawsuits are an ever-present threat, and that even a simple mistake entering a code on a Medicare billing can result in federal felony charges. The for-profit system seems designed to cater to shareholders rather than to patient care, and dedicated doctors are forced out in the process. "The business side of medicine [is] much more complex, unforgiving, and brutal than I had ever imagined," Fulkerson writes.

Despite its serious theme, the book sparkles with wit, pointed sarcasm, and humor. It also faces tragedy and loss head-on in passages that confront difficult decisions, taking a reasoned yet compassionate experience-based approach: "Extending someone's life is valuable; extending someone's death is not."

Character descriptions are whimsical, pointed, and graphic, as with "Sam didn't speak English; he spoke *country*" and "he smiled with his whole body." Depictions of places and items are no less potent: something "smells like diarrhea mixed with evil," or is "as much fun as a Tabasco enema." Such spirit extends to observations such as those concerning authentic Japanese food, as Fulkerson describes his wife's scream as she watched a flash-frozen shrimp come to life on her plate.

Daniel Fulkerson's *Nothing Good Happens at ... the Baby Hospital* offers all of the fast-paced drama and intriguing side-stories of a medical television series, with the added element of clear and accessible procedural explanations. At the end of it all, and despite the severe stress of his profession, Fulkerson answers the question, "Is it worth it?" with a resounding yes.

KRISTINE MORRIS (March 30, 2017)

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