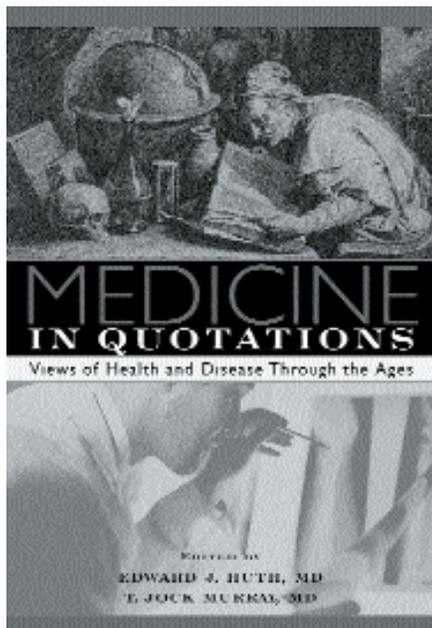


# Reviews

edited by Walter Pagel



**MEDICINE IN QUOTATIONS: VIEWS OF HEALTH AND DISEASE THROUGH THE AGES.** EDITED BY EDWARD J HUTH AND T JOCK MURRAY. PHILADELPHIA: AMERICAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS; 2000. 524 PAGES. HARDCOVER \$49.00. ISBN 0-943126-83-5.

DAWN CHALAIRE is an associate scientific editor in the Scientific Publications Office and managing editor of the physician newsletter at The University of Texas M D Anderson Cancer Center. Formerly she was lifestyles editor for the Sulphur Springs News-Telegram, a Northeast Texas newspaper with a circulation of about 8,000.

Perusing a copy of *Medicine in Quotations: Views of Health and Disease Through the Ages*, one cannot help being struck by the sheer volume of literature written through the centuries about physicians and their profession.

For those who lack the time or inclination to read all of the more than 2500 works referred to in its pages, however, Huth and Murray offer an edited version—a collection of 3000-plus excerpts from some of the world's greatest writers and thinkers. The result is a book that contains wit, insight, humor, and profundity in unusual abundance.

As the editors explain in their introduction, quotations were chosen not only for their relevance to medical concepts and practice, but also for their relevance to all human affairs. (They were not chosen for their conformity to the editors' views.) The entries appear under topic headings from miracles to myositis ossificans, from circulation to civilization, and from preventive medicine to publishing. Although diverse, the topics as a whole serve to illustrate how inextricably health and medicine are woven into almost every aspect of life.

The book's topic headings are arranged alphabetically. Quotations appear chronologically under each heading (with the person to whom a quotation is attributed noted at the beginning and the work in which it was found at the end) to show the progression of thought on each topic through time. This allows each quotation to be viewed separately and as part of an expanding larger context: Quotations listed under a single heading make up a complete unit, each topic contributes to the book as a whole, and the book contains hundreds of references to other works that, when viewed collectively, provide an even more complete picture of the human condition.

A large number of quotations appear under some topic headings, including doctors, physicians, medicine, and medical practice. This is only proper given the book's subject, but many of these quotations are very similar, and several could be eliminated without sacrificing the scope of the book. Alternatively, many topic headings contain only one quotation. Most of these are obscure disorders

or have marginal relevance to medicine. However, those searching for quotations about headaches or impotence, for example, might expect to find more on these subjects.

*Medicine in Quotations* is not the first book of its kind; at least three others have been published, most notably *Familiar Medical Quotations* by Maurice Strauss. As the editors explain in their introduction, this latest effort improves on its predecessors by including more recent quotations, a more detailed history of medical concepts, and more precise citations. Moreover, the book is extremely easy to navigate because the editors have taken pains to explain its arrangement and supply two exhaustive indexes, arranged by subject and author-citation.

Relying too heavily on these extensive reference tools, however, could detract from the reader's enjoyment of the book. Exciting and unexpected discoveries await those who read it haphazardly, and the search for a quotation under a particular topic heading can easily turn into an hour's reading of unrelated subjects.

*Medicine in Quotations* is a boon to medical writers, who will find within its pages a ready source of leads, interesting and amusing asides, and dramatic endings for their writing. Those who linger (and it is difficult not to) will also find that their knowledge and understanding of medical history and current issues is expanded as well. Physicians will encounter a steady stream of clinical descriptions, both historical and modern, intermingled with admonitions and affirmations regarding their profession. These selections are sometimes reassuring, sometimes challenging, and occasionally unsettling. Entries under the same topic heading often contain contradictory views, inviting readers to form or re-form their own opinions.

As Norman Moore wrote in 1893 (what review of a book of quotations would be complete without a quotation?), "The true use of reading in medicine is to make him think. . . . Perfect knowledge is that which has been thought over; imperfect knowledge that which has only been remembered."

Dawn Chalaire