

The Making of the Ideal Physician

E.C. Rosenow

J.K. Mansel

W.R. Wilson

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The Making of the Ideal Physician is a timely, deeply informed, invaluable reference for physicians at every stage of their careers.

The Making of the Ideal Physician by a trio of impressively credentialed doctors—Edward C. Rosenow, J. Keith Mansel, and Walter R. Wilson—is an outstanding and comprehensive guide to becoming an effective physician. The book has much to offer patients, as well.

Written in concise, well-organized chapters, the book begins by addressing those contemplating a medical career, outlining the skills and personality traits needed, and supplying invaluable tips on applying to, interviewing for, and gaining admission to medical school.

Subsequent chapters offer similarly knowledgeable advice on succeeding in medical school, having a successful residency, and serving in hospitals and private practices. The book goes on to illuminate later aspects of a medical career, including mentoring, serving on boards, and teaching. It also covers grittier topics like coping with stress and burnout, working through conflicts with colleagues, and retirement.

The book is written in a clear, friendly, jargon-free style, making it an excellent starting point for high school students contemplating medical careers. Information is well organized and complete, made easily accessible by the judicious use of boldfaced subheads, bulleted lists, examples, and boxed sidebars. Checklists of what will—and won't—carry weight with medical school admission boards, what skills to focus on to fill various positions, mini case studies, and lists of physicians' obligations to patients are included throughout.

The book will also be useful to patients; it fosters understanding of what doctors learn and experience in the course of training, and provides good groundwork for a productive relationship. Chapters on what physicians owe their patients will help patients understand what's reasonable to expect and what's not, and will encourage shy patients to voice their questions and concerns about treatments.

A chapter for physicians on supporting patients through end-of-life illnesses will be helpful to any family coping with terminal illness, while a special chapter for patients offers numerous tips on making the most of doctors' limited time, coming to the appointment with information that will facilitate treatment, and participating in a productive, healing alliance with a physician. This chapter also includes a suggested "Patient's Bill of Rights."

One of the most refreshing aspects of the book is that it consistently pays attention to the human side of medicine. The book addresses topics such as the goal of treating all patients—even angry and uncooperative ones—with compassion; the need to encourage rather than lecture; and the importance of remaining alert to auxiliary problems that patients may need help with, such as depression, fear, stress, and addiction.

Though the book is a product of more than a century of combined medical experience, there is nothing hidebound about it. A chapter on stress and burnout, of interest to both doctors and patients, discusses non-pharmacological coping alternatives such as therapy pets, massage, the benefits of laughter, and a promising study that suggests that stroking velvet lowers stress and depression.

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SUSAN WAGGONER (April 10, 2018)

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