

safety role model for all of medicine. I again stress the need for young anesthesiologists to read *Laughing and Crying about Anesthesia* for another history lesson about patient safety, the current sentinel topic for our patients and their practitioners.

While *Laughing and Crying about Anesthesia: A Memoir of Risk and Safety* is a bit chatty and perhaps too personal and intimate at times, reading this book is something I encourage you to undertake. Zeitlin states that his book “is intended for the interested nonmedical reader” to educate this group about what we really do and enlighten them to the seriousness of our purview. I believe that the interested medical-anesthesiology reader will also gain a much-needed perspective when reading this book, and I encourage this group to gain the advantage of understanding Zeitlin’s biases by reading and reliving his journey, much of which the reader may never have experienced.

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Reference

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Good in a Crisis: A Memoir. Margaret Overton, M.D. New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2012. Pages: 256. Price: \$24.00.

Margaret Overton had it all: an established career as an anesthesiologist; a 20-yr marriage to a surgeon; two bright, beautiful teenage daughters; and an envious lifestyle in an upscale Chicago neighborhood. But then things changed. At times gripping, at times laugh-out-loud funny, *Good in a Crisis* is a memoir by Overton that recounts a 6-yr period in her life. In that time, many of the givens in her life – such as her marriage and health of friends and family – started to come undone. Assuming that she would quickly find a male companion with whom to share the rest of her life, she starts Internet dating, but soon receives a life-threatening diagnosis. Overton’s wry observations and sense of humor, whether describing a bad date or a dire situation, will draw the reader in and make the book hard to put down.

As anesthesiologists, we often feel that we are masters of our universe, immune to the illnesses of those we treat day in and day out. At the outset of the book, Overton’s close anesthesiologist friend copes with the implications of his myocardial infarction and bypass surgery. He becomes philosophical, providing a backdrop for deep and meaningful conversations with the author on topics of career and life. Seven months later, he is dead. The theme “everything can change in an instant” is introduced and continues throughout the book.

As her story begins, we learn that Overton has decided to leave her husband. There have been suspicions of infidelity for

many years and the marriage has devolved into an atmosphere of noncommunication and outright hostility. When Overton tells her husband she wants a separation, his response is, “That’s fine.” Overton writes, “twenty years, two children, and that was it. No discussion, just ... fine.” The divorce proceedings drag on for years, inflicting endless distress, “collateral damage,” and expense. In the end, Overton concludes, “the biggest asshole wins. At least the biggest asshole takes home the most stuff.”

Determined to meet men, Overton turns to the Internet and starts dating for the first time in 23 yr. She describes the often hilarious situations she finds herself in with the men she meets on Match.com. She finds herself on first dates with men wearing makeup, men with brown teeth, men who offer to “off” her ex-husband, and numerous other colorful characters. The descriptions of these and other dates will often have the reader laughing out loud. Yet Overton is also able to take an honest look at herself when analyzing why she can’t seem to find Mr. Right. Her self-deprecating humor amuses us as we cheer her on in her quest.

One evening while on a date, Overton develops “the worst headache of my life.” She writes, “in medicine we know what that means ... you’re going to die, or worse, you won’t die. You’ll just wish you were dead.” The next day, a cerebral aneurysm is diagnosed; fortunately, it has not ruptured. Days later, it is treated with coiling. Overton writes, “It seemed almost as if nothing had ever happened. Only everything had happened. I just didn’t realize it yet.” She becomes fearful of dying, of leaving her daughters motherless, and of the unknown dangers involved in living and of caring for patients.

Soon afterward comes a series of health crises among friends and family. On the one hand Overton views these various issues through the eyes of a physician. However, her emotional ties make dealing with these situations much more nuanced than if one were following a medical textbook. This is something to which many of us who have come face-to-face with serious health issues among friends and family will be able to relate.

Over time, Overton learns to cope with the obstacles that mid-life has thrown in her path. The reader will have cheered her on along the way, absorbing the knowledge she has gained, laughing with her during her hilarious exploits, and will close the book hoping that she will go forward and find enduring happiness. She deserves it.

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The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer. Siddhartha Mukherjee, M.D., Ph.D. New York: Scribner, 2011. Pages: 608. Price: \$18.00.

What makes a nemesis? This question comes to mind almost immediately upon reading the title of Siddhartha Mukherjee’s *The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer*. Mukherjee writes that he “felt, inescapably, as if [he] were writing not