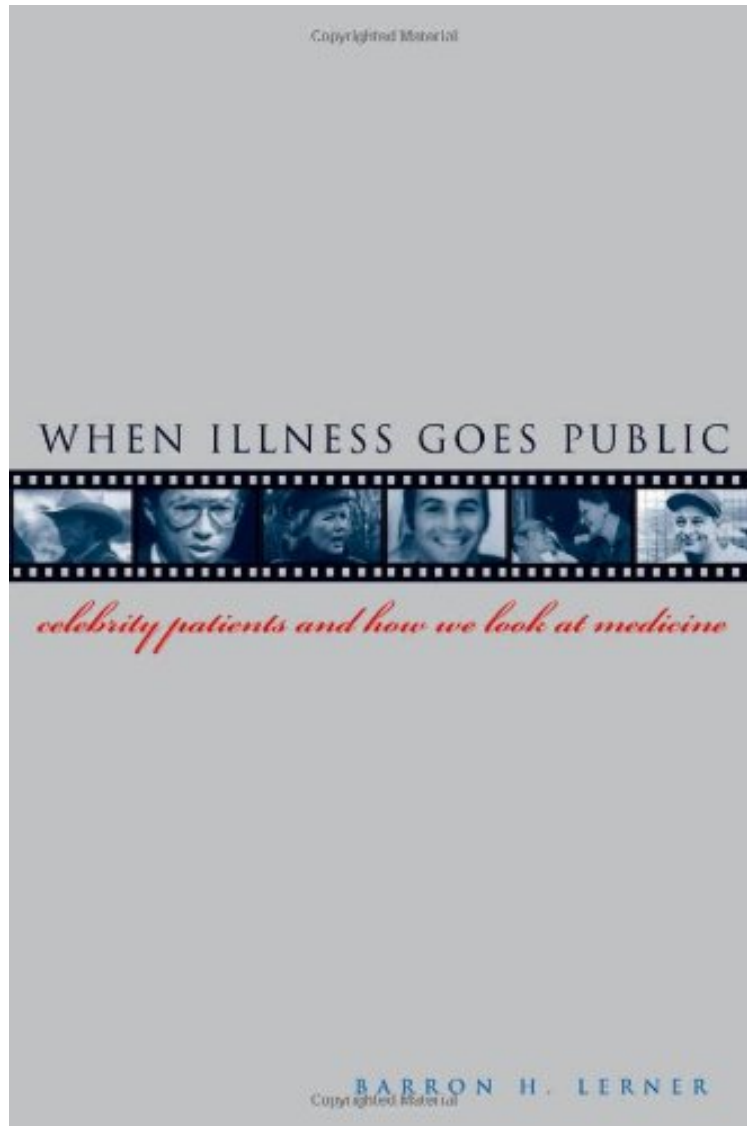


When Illness Goes Public: Celebrity Patients and How We Look at Medicine

Barron H. Lerner

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Barron H. Lerner : When Illness Goes Public: Celebrity Patients and How We Look at Medicine before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised When Illness Goes Public: Celebrity Patients and How We Look at Medicine:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Better than I expectedBy J. HicksThis is a thoughtful and well researched book. It is far from an exploitive tell all about celebrity deaths. Rather, it uses key well-known personalities

to illuminate the evolution of public and media driven medical thought. How does public perception of disease and medicine change over time? Our understandings (and misunderstandings) of medical issues have been affected by the foibles and treatment of celebrities, to the point where they are now "experts." Sadly, the book discusses the self education behind Lorenzo's Oil, a wholehearted attempt by parents of a child affected by an orphan disease to stimulate research and development. I wonder what the author would say now about "experts" like Jenny McCarthy and Tom Cruise, whose evidence is either missing or negligent. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Good Read, Well Written By E. M. Rodriguez A good read; lots to learn from this book. Well written, well researched. I enjoyed it very much. Tony Brenna 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Public War Private Battle By Allyson M. W. Dyar There are very few books that cause me to stop and pause while reading the introduction and subsequently, the conclusion. When *Illness Goes Public* is one of them. Not because of the subject matter notable people fighting their illness in public but because the author cites Lance Armstrong as one of those celebrities. Lance Armstrong. I'm not calling into question that Lance fought cancer and won, but I am calling into question the books praise upon him and his Tour de France accomplishments. Had I not previously read the book, I might have just tossed the book aside because by invoking his name as an example, the authors basic premise has been undermined. And that started me thinking about how those books or medical articles that cited Lances heroic struggle with cancer and winning races will be perceived in the future. Hmm.. Anyway, to the book. As the title says, this is a book chronicling of famous people and their illnesses or in the case of Libby Zion, their deaths being played out in the public (whether they wanted it to or not) and what we can learn from their struggles. Many books on illness and disease focus more on the doctors and science behind the sickness, here, the focus is squarely on the victim and how she or he faces the inevitable. *When Illness Goes Public: Celebrity Patients and How We Look at Medicine* by Barron F Lerner is an easy book to read, an excellent book for someone not versed in medicine or medical history who wants a more human side. On my initial read, I gave this book 4 out of 5 stars and I haven't changed my opinion. Except for one and that's how I feel about Lance Armstrong.

Steve McQueen had cancer and was keeping it secret. Then the media found out, and soon all of America knew. McQueen's high profile changed forever the way the public perceived a dreaded disease. In *When Illness Goes Public*, Barron H. Lerner describes the evolution of celebrities' illnesses from private matters to stories of great public interest. Famous people who have become symbols of illness include Lou Gehrig, the first "celebrity patient"; Rita Hayworth, whose Alzheimer disease went undiagnosed for years; and Arthur Ashe, who courageously went public with his AIDS diagnosis before the media could reveal his secret. And then there are private citizens like Barney Clark, the first recipient of a permanent artificial heart, and Lorenzo Odone, whose neurological disorder became the subject of a Hollywood film. While celebrity illnesses have helped to inform patients about treatment options, ethical controversies, and scientific proof, the stories surrounding these illnesses have also assumed mythical characteristics that may be misleading. Marrying great storytelling to an exploration of the intersection of science, journalism, fame, and legend, this book is a groundbreaking contribution to our understanding of health and illness.

From Booklist Today it's commonplace for Carnie Wilson to chat about her gastric bypass surgery on talk shows or Sally Field to hype a drug by talking about her osteoporosis. Celebrities yapping about what ails them wasn't always common, however, and Lerner believes that its prevalence now indicates cultural changes worth noting. Celebs have come to receive groundbreaking interventions previously -unknown to the general public, whether those consist of antibiotics, as in the case of Franklin Roosevelt Jr., or technological inventions, such as Barney Clark's artificial heart, and to introduce them to the general public, causing thousands to then seek the new treatment. They also create connections to fellow sufferers who identify with and may be inspired by how a celebrity handles the same affliction. Benefits aside, Lerner cautions that there can be considerable drawbacks. After actor Steve McQueen chose alternative cancer treatments in Mexico, thousands flocked over the border seeking similar therapies and encountered similar failure. Others whose stories Lerner retells for his insightful analysis include athletes Jim Piersall and Arthur Ashe. Donna Chavez Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved "In dissecting the illnesses of these famous people, Dr. Lerner brilliantly separates science from the mythologized, bravely battling celebrity. Riveting reading." (Lynn Redgrave and Annabel Clark, authors of *Journal: A Mother and Daughter's Recovery from Breast Cancer*) "It's odd: When a celebrity falls ill, the illness becomes a celebrity, and public life democratized is made generally useful. Barron Lerner has created a fascinating book of this original observation." (Roger Rosenblatt) "Celebrities yapping about what ails them wasn't always common, however, and Lerner believes that its prevalence now indicates cultural changes worth noting... Insightful analysis." (Booklist) "A readable and thoroughly researched book. (Rated four stars: Excellent)" (British Medical Journal) "Lerner has created a powerful prism through his thoughtful exploration of celebrity illness, highlighting societal and cultural forces that widely affect public and private health care decisions... Lerner's skills are superbly demonstrated in detailing complicated stories... fascinating analysis." (JAMA) "Lerner offers a superb volume rich with thorough and entertaining recollections and other information not previously in the public domain... A clear, concise, and captivating treatise that holds the interest of

lay readers and yet illuminates for medical professionals issues that are important to the individual patient as well as the scientific community." (Journal of Clinical Investigation)"Lerner has done a beautiful job of tracing the degree to which celebrity patients have reflected and shaped the modern American understanding of doctors, patients, and illness. This book is a pleasure to read because of its compelling storytelling and analysis." (New England Journal of Medicine)"Physician and associate professor Lerner is blessed with the ability to research widely and write lucidly... Well documented and indexed, this highly readable book deserves a broad audience." (Choice)"Interesting book, and the writing is sprightly." (Roxanna Stein RALPH: of Arts, Literature, Philosophy, and the Humanities)"Engaging and intriguing... Can be enjoyed by a broad public interested in the modern intertwining of the concerns of celebrity and health." (Steven Epstein Isis)" When Illness Goes Public says much about the development of ideas of illness in American culture." (Jasmine Gartner Social History of Medicine)"Compelling... We can learn quite a bit about our society, culture, and values from the way celebrities' illnesses are publicly portrayed. As Lerner perceptively demonstrates, descriptions of illness and death ultimately have as much to do with how people want to imagine these experiences as with actual events... Lerner is at his best when he uses his considerable narrative skills to place these stories into their broader historical, cultural and ethical contexts." (Michael J. Green American Journal of Bioethics)"In Lerner's capable hands, these dozen stories in their retelling are both colorfully dramatic narratives, ripped from the headlines (as the saying now goes) and also probing samples of historically specific contingencies and shifting attitudes." (Chris Feudtner Bulletin of the History of Medicine)"These 12 stories... delight and instruct readers about our own health and eventual mortality, and these are important things to know." (John C. Bailar, III Perspectives in Biology and Medicine)"Well-written, professionally documented." (Robert S. Robins Journal of American History)"A major contribution to our understanding of health and illness." (Abstracts of Public Administration, Development and Environment)" When Illness Goes Public: Celebrity Patients and How We Look at Medicine includes a great many references and keeps the reader engaged and entertained. This easily readable book will satisfy any reader's desire to learn more about famous people who have made a difference in how medicine and disease is handled in the U.S.... A great read." (Fahmida Hussain Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved)From the Back CoverChosen as an Outstanding Academic Title for 2007 by Choice MagazineIn When Illness Goes Public, Barron H. Lerner describes how celebrities' illnesses have evolved from private matters to stories of great public interest. Famous symbols of illness include Lou Gehrig, the first "celebrity patient"; Rita Hayworth, whose Alzheimer disease went undiagnosed for years; and Arthur Ashe, who courageously went public with his AIDS diagnosis before the media could reveal his secret. And then there are private citizens like Barney Clark, the first recipient of a permanent artificial heart, and Lorenzo Odone, whose neurological disorder became the subject of a Hollywood film. Marrying great storytelling to an exploration of the intersection of science, journalism, fame, and legend, this book is a groundbreaking contribution to our understanding of health and illness."Lerner has created a powerful prism through his thoughtful exploration of celebrity illness, highlighting societal and cultural forces that widely affect public and private health care decisions... [A] fascinating analysis." JAMA"Lerner offers a superb volume rich with thorough and entertaining recollections and other information not previously in the public domain... A clear, concise, and captivating treatise that holds the interest of lay readers and yet illuminates for medical professionals issues that are important to the individual patient as well as the scientific community." Journal of Clinical Investigation"Lerner has done a beautiful job of tracing the degree to which celebrity patients have reflected and shaped the modern American understanding of doctors, patients, and illness. This book is a pleasure to read because of its compelling storytelling and analysis." New England Journal of Medicine"Engaging and intriguing... Can be enjoyed by a broad public interested in the modern intertwining of the concerns of celebrity and health." Isis