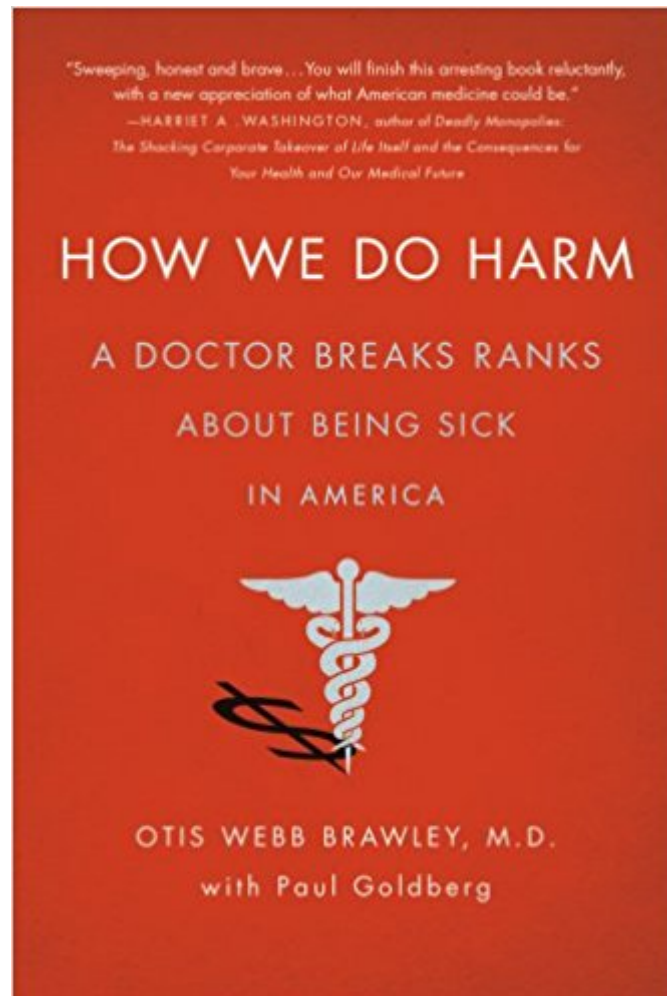




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How We Do Harm: A Doctor Breaks Ranks About Being Sick In America



Synopsis

How We Do Harm exposes the underbelly of healthcare today—the overtreatment of the rich, the under treatment of the poor, the financial conflicts of interest that determine the care that physicians provide, insurance companies that don't demand the best (or even the least expensive) care, and pharmaceutical companies concerned with selling drugs, regardless of whether they improve health or do harm. Dr. Otis Brawley is the chief medical and scientific officer of The American Cancer Society, an oncologist with a dazzling clinical, research, and policy career. How We Do Harm pulls back the curtain on how medicine is really practiced in America. Brawley tells of doctors who select treatment based on payment they will receive, rather than on demonstrated scientific results; hospitals and pharmaceutical companies that seek out patients to treat even if they are not actually ill (but as long as their insurance will pay); a public primed to swallow the latest pill, no matter the cost; and rising healthcare costs for unnecessary—and often unproven—treatments that we all pay for. Brawley calls for rational healthcare, healthcare drawn from results-based, scientifically justifiable treatments, and not just the peddling of hot new drugs. Brawley's personal history—from a childhood in the gang-ridden streets of black Detroit, to the green hallways of Grady Memorial Hospital, the largest public hospital in the U.S., to the boardrooms of The American Cancer Society—results in a passionate view of medicine and the politics of illness in America - and a deep understanding of healthcare today. How We Do Harm is his well-reasoned manifesto for change.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Dr. Brawley is a premier academic oncologist and a minority doctor in the nation's largest inner city hospital. "How We Do Harm" places in stark contrast the health care resources available to the rich and the poor, the insured and the uninsured, the white community and the community of color . He makes the cogent point that more testing, screening, and interventions available to the rich does not always mean better medical care ." --Bruce Chabner, MD, Director of Clinical Research, Massachusetts General Hospital Cancer Center

Otis Brawley is one of America's truly outstanding physician scientists. In How We Do Harm, he challenges all of us-- physicians, patients, and communities-- to recommit ourselves to the pledge to 'do no harm.'" --David Satcher, Former Surgeon General of the United States, Director, Satcher Health Leadership Institute, Morehouse School of Medicine

"Sweeping, honest and brave . . . "How We Do Harm" dazzles with a wealth of scientific insight, but its genius lies in the author's recounting of individual patient stories that illuminate the dark underbelly of medicine's missteps. Brawley does not shrink from revealing medicine's warts, but this book offers much more. It is a triumph of humanity and clarity in which oncology becomes a Rorschach for the practice of American medicine. You will finish this arresting book reluctantly, with a new appreciation of what American medicine could be." --Harriet A

.Washington, author of "Deadly Monopolies: The Shocking Corporate Takeover of"

"My friend and colleague Otis Brawley has written a raw and honest portrayal of our health care system. There are certain to be special interest organizations and medical groups that take issue with Dr. Brawley's conclusions, but few can argue with the scientific rigor he has demonstrated in writing this book. Otis is the go- to oncologist I send so many patients to see, because he is not only a great doctor, but also a compassionate man. As we discuss the transformation of health care in this country, put Dr. Brawley's book at the top of your list." --Sanjay Gupta, Associate Chief of Neurosurgery Grady Memorial Hospital, Chief Medical Correspondent, CNN

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DR. OTIS BRAWLEY is the chief medical and scientific officer and executive vice president of the American Cancer Society. Dr. Brawley currently serves as professor of hematology, oncology, medicine and epidemiology at Emory University. He is also a CNN medical consultant. He is a graduate of the University of Chicago, Pritzker School of Medicine, and completed a residency in internal medicine at University Hospitals of Cleveland, Case-Western Reserve University, and a fellowship in medical oncology at the National Cancer Institute. PAUL GOLDBERG is an award-winning investigative reporter who covers oncology for The Cancer Letter, a weekly publication focused on drug development and the politics of cancer. His articles have appeared in The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, The Washington Monthly and he has been featured on 60 Minutes, 20/20, CNN and NPR. Goldberg is also the author of two books on the Soviet human rights movement.

Dr. Brawley (excuse me, Otis) has written a book about the kind of things doctors say to each other, but not out loud and certainly not for publication. The contrast of healthcare for the overprivileged to the lack of care for the underserved (and the sea of confusion for those in-between) should not exist in the United States, and yet it does. That so much of this happens in the care of people with cancer is really unforgivable. Many will be unhappy with the author, but many more will have to agree that he is indeed telling the truth -- and doing so in a way that is compulsively readable. Otis knows how to get your attention and weave a tale that points out the things you should be seeing. He does not claim to have the answers and is free with admitting his own missteps along the way. I already sent a copy to my niece who is a 2nd year resident at an inner-city hospital and told her to be sure to pass it around once she has read it.

I could not put this book down. I would say this is a must read for anyone that might get or who has cancer. Also anyone who has a chronic health problem should put this book in their library. I think Dr. Brawley gives compelling examples that illustrate how our health care system is broken. Read this book! This is an excellent book unless you are a quack, a greed driven doctor or drug rep.

Dr. Brawley points out that we should not waste valuable tax money or even insurance money on unproven cures or on drugs that cost 10-20 times as much as a proven drug. All medical care should be research based, rational and above all "do no harm". I hate to tell you this, but we as a country cannot afford to waste massive amounts of money anymore. If we don't get serious about health care it will break the country. We cannot afford to transfer wealth to quack doctors or for procedures that don't work. A spinal fusion costs about \$80,000 yet 80% of the research says it does no good and it does a lot of harm. Is this any way to run a health care system? If you don't believe Dr. Brawley read the research for yourself. Use a little of your time to dig and see if he is telling the truth. A lot of the raw research is locked up tight and hard to access and not easy for a lay person to understand. We must rely on honest doctors like Dr. Brawley to tell us the truth about our healthcare system. The chapters on the "PSA" test for prostate cancer were shocking to say the least. All the examples about the breast cancer problems are on point. My wife went through this several years ago and thank goodness we had a doctor whose first words were "I don't give any treatment that has not been through a double blind study." We feel like my wife received excellent treatment without receiving too much treatment. Too much can be as bad as too little as Dr. Brawley states. Dr. Brawley points out through his examples that "raw greed" on the part of hospitals, doctors and drug companies has laid waste to our health care system. The economic incentives are all on the side of more care not appropriate care. There is a vast difference between the two. Thank you Dr. Brawley.

Dr. Brawley tells chilling stories of poor patients being undertreated and rich patients using too many scarce and expensive medical resources, usually to the detriment of their pocketbook or health (or both). His goal is to have physicians and patients make decisions based on science, instead of fear or monetary gain. His primary focus is on breast and prostate cancer. This book is a must read for information on these or any cancers. The title of the book is from the physician's creed 'first, do no harm', which should be everybody's creed from mechanic to carpenter, but especially health care workers. The author writes of doctors, drug companies and health care insurers that are more interested in profit (or are not up to date with the latest medical information) than in providing appropriate care for their patients. The important word here is 'appropriate'. As he says in the book "life is a crapshoot", and in medicine nothing is absolute, a procedure that saves one person can kill or cripple another. He cites a lot of statistics and uses a lot of medical and statistical terms, but still is very interesting and understandable writer. His horror stories on prostate cancer patients and his belief that screening for the cancer and unnecessary treatment has devastating results hit home for

me. I would have thought a LOT more about my cancer and my urologists' treatment options had I read this book. I feel I must be very lucky not to have any consequences or side effects described by Dr. Brawley after my radical prostatectomy (in 2004) and short-lived Lupron hormone treatment (2006) (I would rather die than live with hormone side effects), and then radiation treatments (to stop slowly increasing PSA) in 2008. My cancer was very aggressive and would not have been found without the PSA test. Would I have done anything different? Probably, and it probably would have been to my detriment. If I had read this book, I would have forgone the Lupron (completely useless and expensive) and radiation treatments, and may have reduced my risks. But, it only shows that while statistics are great and logical, when it comes to cancer, can anybody not want the most aggressive treatment? If you opt not to get the most aggressive treatment and the cancer spreads until it is untreatable, then you probably would have thought that the risks were worth taking. I just don't believe he made his case against screening, because knowing is better than not knowing, and the real problems are caused by the treatments. P.S.- I just finished reading Dr. Welch and associates book "Over Diagnosed". They have convinced me, because of much more data than this book, that Dr. Brawley is correct that screening for cancers should be looked at much more critically - everybody needs to read "Over Diagnosed".

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