

Author Responds to Book Review: Hospitals and Health

The following is in response to the book review of Hospitals and Health: Your Orthomolecular Guide to a Shorter, Safer Hospital Stay, by Dr. Damien Downing (J Orthomol Med, 2011; 26: 189-190)

Dr. Damien Downing's generally positive review of *Hospitals and Health* raised some valid criticisms that deserve answer. One question Dr. Downing repeatedly asked was, "Who is this book really for?"

Publishers immediately ask that very question when a book proposal comes their way. The answer can be "no one," and refusal to publish. In 2008, when Dr. Abram Hoffer wanted to write a history of hospitals, he faced the same problem he faced some fifteen years earlier when he tried to get his book on vitamin C and cancer published. The cancer book, written by Abram at the direct and repeated request of Linus Pauling, was unable to find a publisher even when Dr. Pauling endorsed it, contributed to it, and personally submitted it to various publishers. It was repeatedly turned down. The book eventually was published in 2000 as *Vitamin C and Cancer*, by Quarry Press, a small but significant firm in Kingston, Ontario. In 2004, it was reissued by the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine Press as *Healing Cancer: Complementary Vitamin & Drug Treatments*. The College also published a professional edition in 2011. Persistence paid off.

A history of hospitals was even harder to get published. When Abram and I first discussed this idea, we had already been working with a much larger publisher, Basic Health Publications in California, updating and expanding his famous 1988 textbook, *Orthomolecular Medicine for Physicians*. This time, the agreed target audience was the general public. Accordingly, the book was released as *Orthomolecular Medicine for Everyone* in 2008. That same publisher also released Abram's and my book *The Vitamin Cure for Alcoholism* in 2009, just a couple of weeks before Abram died. Abram's very last email to me was that he was telling colleagues about it.

Honoring Abram's memory, this publisher remained enthusiastic about publishing or-

thomolecular topics in general and Abram's new reflections on hospital care in particular. But it was clear that a practical user's guide would be better received by the general public than would a history. The result was a book that, to Dr. Downing, "seems unclear exactly what kind of beast it is." *Hospitals and Health* is, indeed, part history and part self-help. The book presents both background and solutions to a severe and ever-increasing iatrogenic problem that might more accurately be expressed as "Hospitals or Health."

Dr. Downing opines that the publisher seems to have "mis-targeted the audience." He would prefer that the book, "if the aim were to preach to the converted, like me, should be more fact-crammed, but if it were to help prospective patients to reframe their approach to doctors and hospitals - as the cover indicates - I think it should be much shorter and punchier, and perhaps even more anecdotal." Perhaps so, or, perhaps the public is ready for more than short and punchy. Why not go for it? Popular-press publishing speaks to a big audience. For example, in the three years since its publication, Abram's revised *Orthomolecular Medicine for Everyone* has gone through many printings and is about to be published in Chinese. Just as Dr. Hugh Riordan wanted "to make orthomolecular a household word," so did we. The way to do that is to take your message directly to the people, every chance you get.

Having taught school and university students for many years, it is my contention that teaching the public requires first reaching the public. Get the information out there, make it interesting, and make it practical. And while you are at it, teach them more about orthomolecular than they expected. I make no apologies whatsoever for this pedagogical approach. The general reader needs to know that hospitals are genuinely dangerous while genuinely necessary; how it came to be that way; and what s/he personally can do about it now. No, *Hospitals and Health* is not for physicians. This book is for the people on the other end of the stethoscope.

- Andrew W. Saul
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