

informed techniques that have empirical support but also recommends using recreational drugs to create spiritual awareness, despite evidence that this can lead to poor psychological outcomes.

It is informative that Harris, a committed atheist, joins this debate and comes down on the side of spirituality as a crucial concept that relates to mental health, with implications for medical practice. He usefully expands this concept beyond the individual. He captures the zeitgeist of 'religion-free spirituality' but at a cost: academically robust accounts of spirituality and mental wellness deserve to be empirically and philosophically constructed without first ring-fencing the enquiry in this way.

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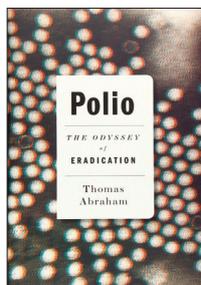
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**Polio: the Odyssey of Eradication**

**Thomas Abraham**

*C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd, 2018, HB, 320pp, £19.26, 978-1849049566*



**A WORLD FREE OF POLIO?**

*Polio: the Odyssey of Eradication* is a fascinating book providing an insight into how polio became the second disease (after smallpox) to be targeted for global eradication, and why, after a multi-billion dollar vaccination campaign spanning 31 years, polio still causes a small number of cases each year.

The book is written by Thomas Abraham, a journalist, who delves into the politics behind why polio was chosen for eradication over the likes of measles and diphtheria, how the Salk and Sabin vaccines were developed (with some questionable ethics along the way), and how the Rotary

Association came to be one of the biggest funders of polio vaccination globally.

After Franklin D Roosevelt was struck down by a paralytic illness in 1921 (thought to be polio at the time, but probably Guillain-Barré syndrome) and outbreaks swept across the US in the 1950s, Americans were on a mission to eradicate polio, erroneously assuming that the rest of the world felt the same way.

In 2019, there are a small number of polio cases each year, mainly in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Nigeria, and the deadline for eradication is being pushed back each year. Abraham chronicles some of the reasons for this ongoing failure including targeted killings of polio vaccinators by the Taliban, loss of confidence after a plot by the CIA to use vaccines to find Osama Bin Laden, and myths about the vaccine being used to sterilise populations. Additionally, the live vaccine has been causing outbreaks, and the goal of eradication remains elusive.

This book will be of interest to GPs, especially those with an interest in global and public health. Just because a disease potentially can be eradicated, does it mean we should try? The answer is much more nuanced than one might expect.

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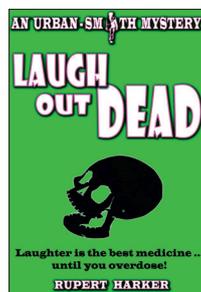
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**Laugh out Dead: an Urban-Smith Mystery**  
**Rupert Harker**

*The Blue Belvoir, 2018, PB, 299pp, £7.99, 978-1913006013*



**SUPERNATURAL MIRTH**

*Laugh out Dead* is an interesting title that caught my attention. Following his interest in pathology as a medical student, Rupert Harker was inspired to write this book by

watching classic Sherlock Holmes. It is the first book in a self-published Urban-Smith Mystery series. The main character is the curiously named forensic pathologist Rupert Harker, who meets a paranormal detective, Fairfax Urban-Smith, when he enters the mortuary, disturbing the post-mortem that Rupert is conducting. Fairfax eloquently and effortlessly deduces the sorry soul's untimely end with perfect precision. And there the story begins.

Rupert and Fairfax form an unlikely partnership. Fairfax, a renowned criminal investigator of supernatural phenomena, (a 'paranorensicologist'), introduces Rupert to concepts such as 'sensitives' and 'vibrations'. Rupert is sceptical. However, when more than one high-profile Russian scientist dies by apparently laughing to death, the pathological evidence suggests that they may be connected. The cases incorporate paramilitaries, ex-KGB scientists, assassins, and some cheeky innuendo references. Rupert gets a share of romance with the lovely Nell, which, in turn, leads the story towards a new avenue of events.

During an interview for the book, the ice-cream-eating author describes a difficult period in his life where he required psychological intervention. Encouraged by his therapist, the author commands respect for demonstrating hope and opportunity even when battling with mental health issues. I enjoyed learning terms such as papamorsophobia (a fear of being bitten by the pope) and lingotelepathy (the ability to communicate with trees).

Using anatomical, pathological, and some physiological descriptions, the author weaves elements of Sherlock Holmes with medicine, the paranormal, and physics. I enjoyed reading this light-hearted and witty book, and learned some new terms too.

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The complete trilogy of the series is now available: <http://r-harker.com/books/>

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