if it meant putting the health of the public at risk or driving employees to suicide.  

*Bad Blood* is a worrying account of the power of persuasion, reiterating the essential need for critical and expert review of medical devices prior to their use within the public domain. With Holmes now facing a prison sentence for fraud, this book is a stark reminder to us all that success in health care must be far more than an enchanting pitch from a deluded visionary.

Elizabeth Dapre,  
GP, ACF, ST1, Wythenshawe Hospital, Manchester.  
Email: elizabeth.dapre@nhs.net  
DOI: https://doi.org/10.3399/bjgp19X706937

*Good Doctoring*  
‘Listen to the patient. He is telling you the diagnosis.’ (19th-century physician William Osler)  

Only around 1-in-10 of the million people who visit NHS GPs every weekday have their symptoms further investigated in secondary care. So what of the 90% who are not referred? Do they feel less worried, cared for, and more able to cope with their symptoms when they leave the surgery? As we know, this is a complex process and involves listening, acknowledgement, and communication skills.

The problem with the training of doctors is that so much of it takes place in hospitals with the 10% of people who have already become ‘patients’, and by specialist doctors whose job it is to understand their symptoms in terms of defined medical diseases. So how do doctors learn about how to help the 90% majority? Dr John Lauener has been one of those many broadminded and imaginative teachers who have worked to hone that understanding, helping GPs to be better general practice doctors and not just hospital-trained doctors. This book of 54 short, concise essay pieces is very readable and can be dipped into whenever one has a few minutes to spare and time to reflect, with insights for patients too. A quick glance down the intriguing titles of the essays in the book’s contents will grab anyone’s attention and draw them in. Ideas range from how capitalism is influencing health care to acknowledging our deepest, secret sexual desires. If that alone doesn’t insist that the reader must beg, buy, or borrow this book, I don’t know what will!

Robert MacGibbon,  
Retired GP, Westleton, Suffolk.  
Email: macgibbon@btinternet.com  
DOI: https://doi.org/10.3399/bjgp19X706949

Lesley Morrison, John Gillies, Samuel Tongue, and Ali Newell (eds)  
Polygon Press, 2019, PB, 96pp, £6.99, 978-1844974885
father’s death earlier this year it wasn’t surprising that I found some of the poems in the final section particularly resonated with me. Denise Levertov is a wonderful poet and ‘Talking to Grief’ is a powerful metaphorical evocation of loss:

Ah, grief, I should not treat you like a homeless dog who comes to the back door for a crust, for a meatless bone. I should trust you.

It is not loss in death but decline though dementia that many readers will also identify with in Bob Hicok’s ‘Alzheimer’s’:

Chairs move by themselves, and books. Grandchildren visit, stand new and nameless, their faces’ puzzles missing pieces.

Ah, grief, I should not treat you like a homeless dog who comes to the back door for a crust, for a meatless bone. I should trust you.

I should trust you.

However, this edition is shot through with plenty of joy as well. In Jo McDougall’s ‘Mammogram’, after receiving the all-clear from the surgeon, the patient in the poem gives vent to her relief:

I pull on my radiant clothes. I step into the Hanging Gardens, the Taj Mahal, the Niagara Falls of the parking lot.

Czeslaw Milosz’s ‘Gift’ is a dizzying dance of delight in simply being alive:

A day so happy. Fog lifted early, I worked in the garden. Hummingbirds were stopping over the honeysuckle flowers. There was no thing on earth I wanted to possess.

I knew no one worth my envying him. Whatever evil I had suffered, I forgot.

If only a fraction of the readers of this wonderful anthology enter their surgeries and clinics with this kind of spirit each day, this book may do more to help the NHS be a better place to work in than the many grand schemes costing millions.

Trevor Stammers,
Director, Centre for Bioethics, St Mary’s University, Twickenham.
Email: tspstammers@doctors.org.uk
DOI: https://doi.org/10.3399/bjgp19X706973

The Lady Doctor
Ian Williams
Myriad Editions [Graphic Novels], 2019, PB, 224pp, £14.99, 978-0993563362

PROFESSIONAL INSIGHT

It’s a brave move for a male doctor, in today’s highly sensitive climate, to dare to tell the story of Lois, a 40-year-old female divorcée, salaried GP, and sexual health doctor. The Lady Doctor, follow-up to Ian Williams’s debut The Bad Doctor, is a fast-paced graphic novel, which follows the twists and turns of ‘lady’ doctor Lois’s work and home life in a rural Welsh community.

Should she go into partnership with her two male colleagues who see her as a safe bet now her biological clock has run out? What to do about her estranged mother who’s suddenly back in touch and needing a liver transplant? And then there are her one-night-stands and dysfunctional relationships, her dubious coping mechanisms, the nippings-out for a smoke, the downing of wine after work, not to mention the drug addicts and STI-ridden patients who keep knocking on her clinical door.

Weaving its way through the ethically challenging antics of this book is a very human, at times hilarious, and insightful narrative of a woman you can’t help but grow to love. The messy mix of Lois’s personal brokenness and that of her patients is touching, and the issue of addiction, in its many forms, is faced head on. Important ethical and professional issues are tackled with a lightness of touch through comic art, a medium that doesn’t distract from their weightiness. And the GP surgeries represented in cartoon form had me laughing out loud. The professional insights of Ian Williams, who was a GP for 20 years, are apparent throughout.

But does Lois epitomise ‘lady doctors’? I hope not! Does she face realistic professional challenges in her life? Oh yes. And does this male doctor/author/artist get away with it? As far as I’m concerned, yes, he does … by the skin of his teeth!

Felicity Connolly,
GP and Deputy Director of Primary Care Academic Teaching, Lancaster University Medical School, Lancaster.
Email: f.connolly@lancaster.ac.uk
DOI: https://doi.org/10.3399/bjgp19X706961