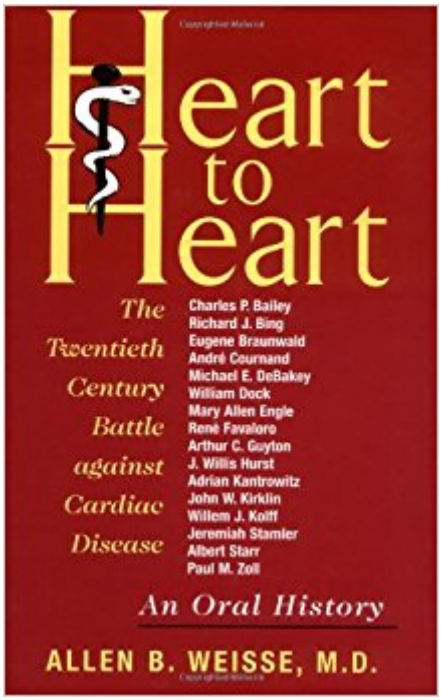
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Heart To Heart: The Twentieth Century Battle Against Cardiac Disease: An Oral History



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Synopsis

The twentieth century was a truly incredible time of medical research productivity and progress in the treatment of heart disease. Methods of diagnosis, treatment, and prevention that were unknown or scarcely imagined at the start of the century have now been incorporated into daily medical practice.In Heart to Heart, Dr. Allen B. Weisse presents the first collection of in-depth conversations with some of the world's most renowned cardiologists and surgeons. Weisse's interviews bring a special vitality to the doctors' recollections of the people and events that influenced them, their motivations, their problems, their interactions with their contemporaries, and their hopes and beliefs for the future. Since not every doctor who has made important contributions to the treatment and prevention of heart disease could be interviewed for this volume, Weisse includes a biographical section listing other prominent cardiologists and surgeons as well as a list of recommended reading. This comprehensive history will be a resource for any student of cardiology or general medicine.

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Customer Reviews

Weisse, an academic physician who has spent many years at the New Jersey Medical School, is the author of more than 100 medical papers in his specialty of cardiology and such previous books as Conversations in Medicine and Staff and the Serpent. His new book contains interviews he conducted between 1979 and 2000 with 16 pioneers in the diagnosis, prevention, and surgical treatment of cardiac disease. Many of the giants of 20th-century medicine are here: Richard Bing, John Kirklin, Arthur Guyton, Michael DeBakey, Eugene Braunwauld, Willis Hurst, and others. In

these interviews, Weisse engages each subject in candid, lively talks about his work, influences, attitudes, and personal interests. A final chapter speculates on developments to come in the 21st century, and a useful section of "Biographical Notes" gives brief information about numerous individuals mentioned by the interviewees. Although Weisse cites several excellent histories of cardiology in a "Selected Bibliography," a short, introductory chapter outlining that history would have provided useful context for most readers. Nonetheless, this excellent work is recommended for all medical libraries and other libraries with an interest in popular histories of medicine.A.J. Wright, Anesthesia Lib., Univ. of Alabama at Birmingham Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This book is based on interviews with 16 pioneers in cardiac surgery and medical cardiology, almost all of whom are from the United States. Interviews that took place between 1979 and 2000 with Charles Bailey, Andre Cournand, William Dock, and Willem Kolff form the core of this work. The book focuses on scientists and physicians who were born during the late 19th or early 20th century (the youngest is Eugene Braunwald, born in 1929) and is arranged in chronological order. The interviews are supplemented by an index of 208 biographical notes on nationally and internationally prominent medical scientists. Weisse introduces each interview with background information on the interviewee and the medical milieu of the time. The first interviewee, William Dock (1898-1990), describes the work of Karel Wenckebach in Vienna and recounts an interesting history of quinidine, the first antiarrhythmic drug. He repeats the student doggerel poking fun at Wenckebach’s boring lectures: "In der Klinik Wenckebach/Sind nur die ersten Banke wach" ("In Wenckebach’s clinic/Only the first rows can stay awake"). Andre Cournand (1895-1988), who along with Dickinson Richards and Werner Forssmann won the 1956 Nobel prize, eloquently discusses the history of heart catheterization. Cournand uses the term "cryptomnesia" in describing Forssmann. Cryptomnesia means "secret memory" and refers to a situation in which a person read something, subsequently forgot its origin, and then believed that the thought was his own. Mary Allen Engle (born in England in 1922), one of the first fellows of Helen Taussig, was a pioneer in pediatric cardiology and was present at the first "blue baby" operation. Richard J. Bing (born in Germany in 1909) is correctly characterized as a "Renaissance man." He is not only a physician, cardiovascular researcher, and physiologist but also a humanist and composer. Rene G. Favaloro (1923-2000) was also extraordinary. With F. Mason Sones, he introduced a way of bypassing obstructed coronary arteries and made the coronary-artery bypass graft a reality. After becoming depressed by the enormous debts incurred by his institute in Buenos Aires, Argentina, he tragically took his own life. Charles P. Bailey (1910-1993), the hero of mitral commissurotomy, had an amazing career. After performing

cardiac surgery for many years, he went to law school, obtained a degree in 1973, and became a specialist in medical malpractice. Arthur C. Guyton (born in 1919) was struck down by paralytic poliomyelitis while still a surgical resident. Undeterred, he eventually became chairman of a department of physiology and held the position for 41 years. Weisse expresses special appreciation for the work of Albert Starr (born in 1926), who was responsible for introducing the first successful artificial heart valve, the Starr-Edwards caged-ball device for mitral-valve replacement. The interview with Paul M. Zoll (1911-1999) explores the fascinating story of his pioneering treatment of complete heart block and Stokes-Adams disease with the use of external shocks administered to the chest to stimulate cardiac contractions. (This procedure was introduced in the summer of 1952.) One of the best interviews in the book is with Michael E. DeBakey (born in 1908), a giant in the field of cardiac surgery. His work on the repair of aortic aneurysms and aortic dissections (the classification bears his name) and his pioneering use of Dacron are explained in an elegant and informative manner. Most interesting is the discussion of his relationship with Denton A. Cooley, which was severed because of Cooley's improper use of the total artificial heart. On two occasions (in 1983 and 2000), Weisse interviewed Willem J. Kolff (born in 1911), the inventor of the first practical and widely used artificial kidney, who also devised an artificial heart. Others interviewed are Jeremiah Stamler (born in 1919), one of the founding fathers of preventive cardiology; Eugene Braunwald (born in Vienna, Austria, in 1929), a dominant figure in cardiology and editor of Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine (with more than 2 million English-language copies sold and translations into 12 languages); Adrian Kantrowitz (born in 1918), the father of diastolic augmentation, a technique used to improve coronary flow; and J. Willis Hurst (born in 1920), one of the last fellows who trained under Paul Dudley White, the great icon of American cardiology. Hurst later became President Lyndon B. Johnson's personal physician. Weisse's oral history of cardiology uses familiar, understandable language. For the lay reader, explanations of medical terms are given in footnotes. Each chapter can be read independently. This book is a source of authentic and exclusive information from leading cardiac surgeons and cardiologists of the past century and will serve as a useful reference not only for medical historians but also for all cardiologists and cardiac surgeons. The great John W. Kirklin justified the format of oral history with the compelling statement, "How can you understand the world if you don't know what happened in it?" Berndt Luderitz, M.D.Copyright Ã Â© 2002 Massachusetts Medical Society. All rights reserved. The New England Journal of Medicine is a registered trademark of the MMS.

Recently read it. Loved candid interviews and especially how everyone had so many chance events

in their life which ultimately shaped their careers.

As the sudden appearance of cardiovascular disease as a major health threat, so was the response of medical scientists, who began to address every aspect of diagnosis, treatment and prevention of heart diseases which is considered later to be epidemic. In this book Weisse -an academic physician- is presenting the story of the twentieth century battle against cardiac disease through intimate conversations with some of the leading physicians and surgeons who figured so prominently in this effort. As we can see from his biography as a historian and member in history associations, his purpose is to provide a rare type of historical information collected by himself through interviewing 16 pioneers in diagnosis, prevention and treatment of cardiac diseases in a big project. The project started in 1979 when the earliest of these interviews were conducted, and concluded in 2000 the beginning of the new millennium. This period was a golden period in medical research, productivity and progress.The reason why the author used oral history is mentioned for 2 reasons. First, there are already some excellent cardiology history books, some of them are mentioned in "Selected Bibliography" section of the book where the first book is also mentioned. Second, the conversational approach allows questioning these cardiologists in a give and take manner to bring special type of freshness to the history about events, people, motivations, problems, interactions and their hopes and beliefs for the future. These aspects of medical history are rarely available in conventional historical books. He also mentioned the drawback of this approach that there are many other pioneers were excluded who might merit inclusion. To compensate this, he added a list of short biographies to the end of the book.In his 16 interviews, he starts by mentioning some biography and background of achievements of his guest then he asks his guests a variety of questions ranging from personal life and career, experiences, technical history, medical events, achievements in medicine, influences, attitudes and personal interests. Interviews took place in different years and a variety of locations and situations. Some of these interviews took place in the guest office, others on the route between two states. Most of the interviews took place in the United States and few took place in Europe. Therefore the book consists of corresponding 16 chapters and a final chapter is a word from the author about developments to come in the 21st century. In addition, the book ends with biographical notes in which the author writes some words about each character to compensate the uncovered pioneers in cardiology, chapter notes and references, selected bibliography, name index, subject index and about the author.To understand the author writing style and purpose of the book, we need to have a quick overview on his biography. Allen B. Weisse has been on the New Jersey Medical School since 1963. He remained

there for over thirty years, actively engaged in teaching, patient care, medical research and community service. He is a recent past-president of the medical history society of New Jersey and a member of the American association for the history of medicine and the American Osler society. He lectures frequently throughout the United States on a variety of subjects related to medical history and ethics (The about the author section of the book). This is why the author is a practiced historian and not just a physician and through his recording of these oral interviews without change or analysis, we can see his proficiency as a historian. He didn't write too much but he arranged questions and wrote the answers as it is. He wrote an introduction and the last chapter. His introduction is characterized by clear mentioning of the book purpose and legitimization of the methodology used and the writing style. In the last chapter his language is simple, direct and scientific. The author questions to his quests are characterized by being intimate and personal and some of them are "what if" and "what do you regret" types of questions.The book is not intended to give knowledge about encyclopedic history of cardiovascular surgery. Instead it is a cardiologists' centered narration of history with a lot of "behind the scenes" stories about their professional lives and experiences. Therefore it is interesting for readers who are searching for personal biographies of cardiologists and their contributions in cardiac surgery and are interested to see the behind the scenes stories of these cardiologists. This type of information is especially meaningful to readers who work in the same field and are having similar experiences and will enjoy sharing these pioneers their close professional and personal lives and may think of them as ideals and leaders. The book stimulates the enthusiasm of a physician to work and follow these ideals. It motivates the pride of working in this field and touching its impact on society by examining the impact of these pioneers at their time. It is more probably interesting for readers who lived at that time and are closer to the events and landmarks of cardiology. I don't think that this book is interesting to non specialists of cardiology because they cannot see the meaning of this intimate history without working in the field.Regarding a closer view of the type of questions prepared by the author, they concern: personal lives, professional lives and the places and positions they worked in as cardiologists, interesting stories and events that happened to them in their jobs and their relations with their colleagues who may be also pioneers in cardiology, their inventions and discoveries in cardiology and the stories and accidents behind the first discoveries of certain treatments, stories of their patients, their lives and deaths.Regarding weaknesses in the book, some questions are not significant or important to the reader like asking Willem Kolff about the reasons he left Holland, which is a very personal question and the answer is not related to the history of cardiovascular surgery but the history of the cardiologist's life. The author may have rephrased some questions like

these, concentrating on topics that are more interesting to the reader and to broaden the range of readers who may find more interest in other types of questions. In this point also I think there is a need to add a more detailed biography of the cardiologists and their achievements and events in their lives because a normal reader needs to understand who he is reading about. The author knows about these cardiologists and that's why he understands his questions and their answers but there is a lot of vagueness for a normal reader. There is a need to make a group of questions that are repeated with every cardiologist to show a comparison beside the specific questions for each one. May be this was not easy because the interviews took place through 21 years. The author is restricted mainly to cardiologists of the United States and didn't give enough attention to other international cardiologists, may be because he lives in the United States.How does the book contribute to the history of cardiovascular surgery?This book is different from any other scientific history book in this field because it doesn't narrate the history but rather lets the witnesses and creators of history to narrate in their own words and their own experience. The author himself didn't write a lot but he arranged the questions and meetings with the pioneers of cardiac surgery which is a much more difficult task specially that it took 21 years to collect. It is an addition to the written history and not just an arrangement of historical data collected from other written sources. This type of oral history is rare among medical history books -as the author also states in his introduction- which usually collect data from journals and articles. The time period over which the author collected his data is big, covering a sensitive era in cardiology. The questions the author asks to his guests are uncommon and adds to history unusual type of information from behind the scenes and personal opinions, experiences, events and relations between colleagues in the field rather than the usual formal and technical information about the progress in the field. As the author mentioned in his introduction, there are many books covering the history of cardiology but this book is a distinctive perspective of history.

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