maligne, contemporary doppelganger . . . it exploits the very features that make us successful as a species.”

Much of the book focuses on valiant efforts from all quadrants of society to “defeat” cancer. Fittingly, though, the tale concludes in the present day, with a dying patient named Germaine. Mukherjee echoes lessons learned from Vivian Bearing, Ph.D., when he notes that the “War on Cancer may best be ‘won’ by redefining victory.” As the study of oncology matures and departs its “fiery adolescence, entrance[d] with universal solutions and radical cures,” The Emperor of All Maladies will serve as a guidepost to physicians, researchers, patients, and anyone else with an interest in cancer. In leaving us seated there, at Germaine’s bedside, Emperor reveals its greatest treasure: a sense that death is not a loss or a failure, but rather the only unequivocal fact of human existence, and that strength and dignity is found there. On this no additional research need be conducted.

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In their authors’ note, “Chris” Ball and “Rod” Westhorpe introduce this hardcover book as representing “an evolution – of the Geoffrey Kaye Museum of Anaesthetic History, the Anaesthesia and Intensive Care journal and of anaesthesia as a specialty.” In this long-awaited book, these honorary curators of the Geoffrey Kaye Museum have collated and expanded the cover notes that they penned from 1989 to 2011 for volumes 17–39 of the Australian journal Anaesthesia and Intensive Care. Revised but sequenced chronologically in their order of publication as cover notes, these “historical notes” fall naturally into the following unofficial groupings: clearing the airway, inhalers and vaporizers, flowmeters, intravenous and induction agents and equipment, local anesthesia, muscle relaxants, inhalation agents, patient monitoring, and analgesics and premedication.

Strengths of Historical Notes include its scholarly content, pleasing readability, and splendid photography. The book’s weaknesses are those reflected by all such books. It represents a sampler of apparatus and pharmaceuticals and is consequently discontinuous in its timeline. Any such gallery-based book also manifests a geographic bias favoring the museum’s location (Melbourne, Australia) and the collecting bias of its founder (Geoffrey Kaye). Fortunately for the authors, Kaye traveled and collected widely. As illustrated throughout Historical Notes, anaesthetist Kaye was also a gifted machinist who enjoyed “sectioning” through apparatus for educational exhibits. Historical Notes guides both professional and lay readers through an exhilarating review of anesthesia and analgesia through the ages, but particularly through the past 170 yr. The book’s end notes provide a bonanza of information for scholars. The 11-page index is similarly useful to both researchers and readers at large.

Because my own children have never grasped the historical tradition behind what anesthesiologists actually do for a living, I purchased a copy of Historical Notes as a holiday gift for each of them. Whether buying for a library or a loved one, anesthesiologists will be hard pressed to find a better researched or better illustrated “coffee table book” in our specialty. Finally, an anesthesia book that does not induce general anesthesia!

A limited private printing by the Australian Society of Anaesthetists, this book can only be ordered from the merchandise section of the Society website.*

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Things I Didn’t Learn in Medical School: Tough Lessons from a Lifetime of Practice.


In Things I Didn’t Learn in Medical School: Tough Lessons from a Lifetime of Practice, Dr Gary Fanning speaks directly to readers about the behavior he recommends for physicians to maintain the respect of the public. Although we should have learned some of his moral principles in grade school, high school, or certainly by college, his many illustrative stories depict physicians, other healthcare workers, and/or patients who either did not learn them or chose to ignore them. He says the book pertains mainly to those entering the medical profession or other healthcare professions, but others can learn from his experiences as well. Each of the 14 chapters in the book begins with excellent and relevant quotes from famous people.

The “Introduction” and “Who Am I” chapters offer a description of Gary Fanning’s background, providing insights into where he is coming from when he stresses his philosophies concerning hand washing, alcoholism, drug use, and infidelity, the latter in a chapter entitled “Ignore Your Gonads.” His family, his mentors in school, and especially his Episcopalian minister influenced his ideas. Many readers will recall experiences similar to his and accounts of similar untoward incidents. For example, training hospitals in which operating room pharmacies have not implemented programs to confirm that returned drugs and controlled