



## Book review: Doctors Do Cry...

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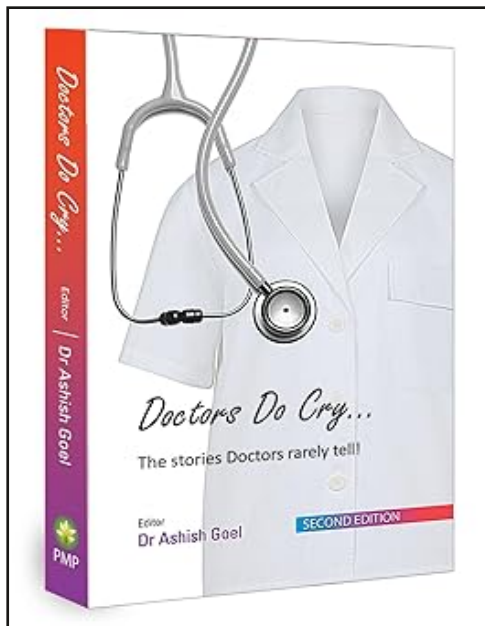
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### **Doctors Do Cry...**

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*Behind the silent walls of care, where life and death entwine,  
A doctor stands with steady hands, yet bears a heart divine.*

This reality resonates throughout Ashish Goel's compelling anthology of short stories and poems, "Doctors Do Cry," which bridges the seeming gap between the profound emotional experiences of medical doctors and their professional detachment.

With 64 short stories and 13 poems, the collection brings together perspectives from a

variety of medical backgrounds, including practising and past physicians as well as medical students. Each of these voices adds to a tapestry of candid stories that subverts the cliché of the emotionally distant doctor. Through these stories and poems, the reader witnesses the fine line that physicians must walk between human empathy and professional rationality.

The narratives unfold like a well-curated compilation of the most trying times in the medical field. In "Compassion," we meet a retired Army Major whose callous delivery of

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a cancer diagnosis makes it doubly distressing. This illustrates how the art of communication (*the touchy-feely part of Medicine*) is sometimes overlooked in our current healthcare delivery. The importance of interpersonal connections is examined in *"The Better Half"* which also explores how sometimes, your entire world can be reduced to one person... who is always there for you no matter what.

This book excels at capturing seemingly ordinary events with deep significance. In *"Is That Music I Hear?"*, a doctor's predicament when interacting with an old patient who has hearing loss changes from a difficult exercise to a gentle reminder of the fundamental value of listening as part of medical practice. These are transformative touchpoints that alter the medical practitioners' approaches to their calling. These are not just stories.

Some of these stories offer a candid account of the trying and challenging moments in medical practice. In *"Angela's Brain Tumour,"* a surgeon battles uncertainty and the burden of discretion, and we learn how doctors bear the weight of difficult decisions and have to deal with guilt when things go wrong. The narratives show us one of their biggest challenges: staying professionally level-headed while genuinely caring for their patients.

What sets this book apart is its simplistic honesty. The authors bare their vulnerabilities with remarkable courage, recounting moments of doubt, inadequacy, and emotional collapse. Interspersed throughout these stories and poems are powerful quotes that leave an indelible mark on the reader's conscience:

- *"Often we lose.....but sometimes we win....for a bit"* (From *The Ashes*, page 9)
- *"They did not tell us how to manage our emotions in medical school"* (Happy New Year, page 30)

- *"After all, I was the doctor and I could not cry"* (*Heartful of Pepsi*, page 44)

- *"We probably have very few wins in our life, but there is no limit to the number of good fights that we put up"* (*May I Help You*, page 61)

- *"Where is the connection? What is the connection? A connection of love? affection? attachment?"* (*Who is Mehboob Bee*, page 165)

- *"After all, God created doctors with the same flesh and bones as other ordinary humans"* (*Concealing Tears With Grace*, page 215)

These admissions are not a sign of weakness but are a testament to the deep, abiding compassion at the heart of medical practice.

The shift from prose to poetry provides welcome variations in rhythm and perspective. The verses offer the reader a glimpse of the weight doctors carry—their unspoken struggles and fears, their deep connections with patients and often disguised fragility (*"This too shall pass"*) and their optimism in the face of acceptance (*"Heartfelt, The Blooming Child"*). *"Peek-A-Boo"* depicts the emotional subtleties in doctors' multifaceted roles, while poems like *"Metamorphosis"* emphasise the fragility of human existence. Alongside the narratives, these poems offer crucial pauses, allowing the reader to comprehend the intense emotional currents that flow beneath the stoic surface of the medical profession.

As each story is complete in itself, offering a poignant account of medical life, it is unique in that it may be read from any point. I was occasionally forced to stop reading these stories, set the book aside, take time to process the raw emotions and give the unfiltered feelings written on its pages some thought. These stories and poems provide a glimpse of the unguarded doctor behind the scrubs and the mask.... and it is both

fascinating and humbling as it pulls the reader into its world and makes them feel the weight of every decision and the emotional toll of medical practice.

The structure of the book deserves particular attention. *“Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested,”* as Sir Francis Bacon once observed. This book is a journey that should begin with thoughtful patience to allow it to reveal its emotional depths bit by bit. The accessible font and print quality make it enjoyable to return to time and time again, and the well-placed illustrations add to the reading experience.

The book's presentation of medicine as both an art and a science is its strongest feature. The anecdotes demonstrate how a doctor's capacity for empathy, understanding, and emotional vulnerability makes them more compassionate, even though medical practice relies on professional expertise. Doctors are better able to relate to their patients as human beings when they listen to them, understand their challenges, and don't hesitate to communicate their own emotions. This book presents a convincing argument for medical humanities inclusion in medical education.

For aspiring doctors, "Doctors Do Cry" offers a view of future trials and triumphs, demanding resilience and courage. For practising doctors, it provides validation of their experiences and emotions. For the general reader, it humanises the medical profession, revealing the people behind the procedures, and the hearts behind the hands that heal.

The book ends on a strong note: admitting one's feelings doesn't make one less competent in one's work; on the contrary, it makes one more human. Despite medical

culture's tendency to view stoicism as a strength, *Doctors Do Cry* inspires the reader to accept human emotions as a vital element of healing.

This book is worthy of being in the hands of anyone who wants to comprehend the intricate relationship between human emotions and professional duty, and is not just for medical college libraries. It serves as a potent reminder that, although being practised in hospitals, medicine touches on the most basic facets of human life, including birth, death, suffering, resignation, fortitude, healing, and hope.

These stories linger with you long after you turn the last page, leaving a greater admiration for the men and women inside the white coats. As I finished this book, I found myself thinking about the countless moments doctors spend at bedsides—celebrating new life one minute, and comforting loss the next. I wrote this poem for them:

In silent wards where shadows seep,  
A life begins, one more to keep,  
While elsewhere on this sacred ground,  
Another soul slips without a sound.

Hands that welcome first breaths here,  
Also, wipe the final tear,  
Through joy and sorrow, night and day,  
They heal, they grieve, they find their way.

Between the cry of new life's dawn,  
And gentle sighs when life moves on,  
Through whispered prayers and diligent care,  
They witness all that life may dare.

Strong they stand, with heads held high,  
Pride around the neck, shouldering a sigh,  
Beneath their coats, feelings multiply,  
*Yes! Doctors can... and they do cry.*