

One curious doctor

Author: Hilton Koppe

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It is always a pleasure to read stories where the writer conveys their emotion and passion across each page. In dance, physical movement tells the emotional story. In narratives, the emotion sits

within or behind the words, where a skilled communicator can reach across to the reader with the minimum of text. Too much clutter in the text impairs the emotion.

Biographies are particularly challenging to read, as although the subject's life may be filled with drama, the prose is often predictable and plodding.

The story is of a dedicated GP who chose rural medicine long before this was fashionable, worked hard and long hours to support his patients and community, but eventually walked away as devotion to duty took a powerful toll on his personal health. The challenges of moving from healer to one needing healing is a compelling story for GP readers. Following the last few years of turmoil and upheaval from COVID-19, perhaps even more so.

Koppe demonstrates his skills at connecting with the reader in this, his first book. Autobiographical, he uses a potpourri of styles as he wanders from the present, through to the distant past and then back again. Sections of narrative are interspersed with poetry and dialogue in an eclectic fashion, encouraging the reader to turn the next page to see what lies ahead. The first chapter sets the scene, with a string of short snippets of

text starting from the most recent and interspersed with 'before that', all the way to before his birth! The reader then travels along his lifeline through a series of anecdotes, both celebrating the joys of life as well as the darkest of moments. The order seems random, but I found the unexpected movements engaging and then looked forward to the latest twist.

The layout of the story is unusual, using the medical interview paradigm of 'History of presenting illness, Past Medical History etc,' as a comforting pathway for clinician readers. The content within these well-worn headings is diverse and pleasantly surprising; far removed from the reductionist approach we were all taught long ago.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and recommend it as a powerful prompt for reader self-reflection, as GPs across all paths may find aspects of Koppe's story echoed in their own experiences. Perhaps this may assist readers as they manage their clinical journey. And in the meantime, enjoy a great read!

Author

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