

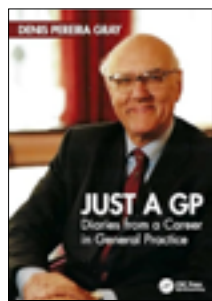
# Book review

## *Just a GP: Diaries from a Career in General Practice*

**Author: Gene Denis Pereira Gray**

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The book is an autobiography of Sir Denis Pereira Gray. It first describes his early life leading into a career in general practice and subsequently follows through with what initially seems to be

a convoluted description of his multiple roles leading education, research and political discussions. The difficulty in reading the text is that the author is a UK-based doctor and many of the descriptions of organisations, including educational institutions, political groups and medical colleges, relate specifically to the British medical system.

However, Pereira Gray is both a clever historian and, at heart, a kind educator. Each section of the book outlines clearly the time at which the events described took place, the role that he played and the relevance to general practice as a speciality. Once the reader accepts the rhythm of these sections, the wisdom in each is revealed.

Sir Denis Pereira Gray is at first not really 'just a GP' as you or I might consider ourselves. The appendices in this autobiography attest to both his numerous qualifications and research publications, and to his significant contribution to general practice and medicine in various roles – President of the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) at one time and Chair of the Academy of the Medical Royal Colleges at another, to name a few.

However, this book seems to have been written to remind any general practitioner

that in fact we are not 'just a GP' either. We are generalist physicians and our role is not only critical to the patients that we see in our rooms but to our community and nation's health.

Pereira Gray weaves patient stories in with discussions of multiple administrative and political encounters during his professional life that mirror our own careers. What might be different is the foresight of the author in many of these encounters, and his passion for general practice as a discipline means he often seems to jump forward to lead or push for further discussion so that general practice is not forgotten for its benefits to the community. What makes the book painful to read is that with the current social and political atmosphere in Australian general practice, we appear to be repeating many of the mistakes that those in the UK medical system made only a little while ago.

This book is a challenging reading experience, for the reasons outlined above. But by the end of my reading journey, I was so glad I rose to that challenge. Despite some of the disappointments that we, as a speciality, feel when we are undervalued, Pereira Gray's reflections on the benefits of general practice to the doctor and patient remind us that our professional skills underpin almost all the long-term good health that a nation experiences.

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