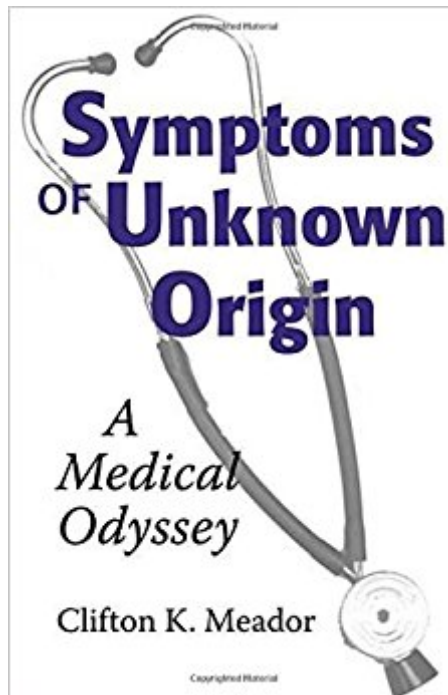




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Symptoms Of Unknown Origin: A Medical Odyssey



Synopsis

For years after graduating from medical school, Dr. Clifton K. Meador assumed that symptoms of the body, when obviously not imaginary, indicate a disease of the body—something to be treated with drugs, surgery, or other traditional means. But, over several decades, as he saw patients with clear symptoms but no discernable disease, he concluded that his own assumptions were too narrow and, indeed, that the underlying basis for much of clinical medicine was severely limited. Recounting a series of fascinating case studies, Meador shows in this book how he came to reject a strict adherence to the prevailing biomolecular model of disease and its separation of mind and body. He studied other theories and approaches—George Engel's biopsychosocial model of disease, Michael Balint's study of physicians as pharmacological agents—and adjusted his practice accordingly to treat what he called "nondisease." He had to retool, learn new and more in-depth interviewing and listening techniques, and undergo what Balint termed a "slight but significant change in personality." In chapters like "The Woman Who Believed She Was a Man" and "The Diarrhea of Agnes," Meador reveals both the considerable harm that can result from wrong diagnoses of nonexistent diseases and the methods he developed to help patients with chronic symptoms not defined by a medical disease. Throughout the book, he recommends subsequent studies to test his observations, and he urges full application of the scientific method to the doctor-patient relationship, pointing out that few objective studies of these all-important interactions have ever been done.

Book Information

Paperback: 200 pages

Publisher: Vanderbilt University Press; 1 edition (April 22, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 082651474X

ISBN-13: 978-0826514745

Product Dimensions: 5.6 x 0.4 x 8.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.5 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 11 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,451,014 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #66 in [Books > Textbooks > Medicine & Health Sciences > Medicine > Special Topics > Essays](#) #378 in [Books > Textbooks > Medicine & Health Sciences > Medicine > Clinical > Physician & Patient](#) #534 in [Books > Medical Books > Medicine > Doctor-Patient Relations](#)

Customer Reviews

Clifton Meador is undoubtedly a gifted clinician but his greater gift is his uncanny ability to capture and define the problems in medicine for which there are no easy labels and no easy cures. Meador's thoughtful, anecdotal style allows every reader entry into that most complex of subjects: body and mind in health and disease. --Abraham Verghese, author of *My Own Country* and *The Tennis Partner*. . . it is rare to find an articulate, analytic account of experience, and even rarer to see how it happened. Unlike a magician, Meador not only shows the empty hat but also where the rabbit was hidden. . . Meador taught himself to eschew mind-body dualism and to expand the range of communication between physicians and patients that can illuminate the meanings of symptoms. For these reasons, I recommend Meador's *Medical Odyssey* to family physicians who may be fellow travelers. --Family Medicine We owe Dr. Clifton Meador . . . a debt of gratitude for teaching us techniques to more effectively listen to the stories our patients want to tell. --Journal of the American Medical Association

"Clifton Meador is undoubtedly a gifted clinician but his greater gift is his uncanny ability to capture and define the problems in medicine for which there are no easy labels and no easy cures. Meador's thoughtful, anecdotal style allows every reader entry into that most complex of subjects: body and mind in health and disease." - Abraham Verghese, author of *My Own Country* and *The Tennis Partner* "Clif Meador does it again -- a new book for physicians about patients who suffer in bewilderment with strange illnesses they do not understand. His stories and approach to 'symptoms of unknown origin' are compelling and thoughtful. Medicine is rarely cookie-cutter nor simply linear from the structure and process of molecular knowledge. The lost art of being a detective and talking productively to 'odd' patients is a special craft in much need of resurrection. The approach in this book makes a superb dent in the problem. Meador's accumulated wisdom from practicing endocrinology for over fifty years is a great read that doesn't disappoint." - Eric G. Neilson, M.D., Chairman, Dept. of Medicine, Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, author of *Immunologic Renal Diseases* "Clifton Meador is a master clinician. This book adds to his legacy. He does not allow preconceived notions to interfere with his need to listen to his patients. He elicits their narrative of distress so that he can minister to the illness they are experiencing. *SYMPTOMS OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN* offers lessons for all who feel compelled to seek medical care, and for all who assume responsibility for providing such. Meador makes his points by relating clinical anecdotes in prose that is lucid and engaging." - Nordin M. Hadler, M.D. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill "The 50-year span of Dr. Meador's career

has seen almost unimaginable changes in how physicians are educated, what practice is like, and what academic environments are like. Through this, Dr. Meador illustrates the importance of being a true physician with knowledge of the scientific but also the ability to communicate with patients and understand their illness from their point of view. This book would make a wonderful graduation present for a medical student - a way to help them understand that they have to think of their own career as an odyssey for them to control, as well as to help them understand that while in school teachers were appointed faculty, but once in practice their patients will be their most influential teachers. What Dr. Meador offers is an example of how to be a continuously learning physician, to keep an open and inquisitive mind, strive to listen, and not prematurely judge. This message might be equally important for experienced physicians, to remind us in these increasingly cynical times of the source of joy in practicing medicine." - Stuart C. Gilman, MD, MPH, University of California, Irvine "A beautiful and wise book by a caring doctor. If I’d had Clif Meador as my teacher, I’d never have had to write _The House of God_. Every doctor should read this." - Samuel Shem, M.D.

I have read literally dozens of books by doctors, and this is the only I have gone back to over and over again. There is a lot of deep wisdom and insight in this book, and yet it is unusually accessible. Dr. Meador's personality, humility, wonder, and skill shines through each of the stories with which he illustrates his journey, gravitating toward patients whose problems could not be diagnosed by others. His approach involves both common sense and extensive medical knowledge, married with empathy and caring. Definitely worth reading

This book, Symptoms of Unknown Origin, was fascinating. The author, Dr. Meador, tells about his working with and learning over time with patients who seem to have no origin for their diagnosis. Using the skills of a neurolinquist he sharpens his ability to find causes where none seem to exist, and such causes are often outside of the medical field. It was a "can't put it down" book.

Received this book extremely fast. Was like new and much better than I was expecting! Awesome book! Thank you!

Very helpful and very insightful

I was interested in getting this paperback book by Clifton Meador MD titled Symptoms of Unknown

Origin A Medical Odyssey. I find the author to be a very caring MD. I hear so many frustrating stories from friends and family about doctors not listening to them when they go to the Doctor or Hospital for help. This book gives me hope that there are Doctors out there that do listen and do care. I think this is a book for physicians as well as patients to take a closer look at symptoms. When I was 16 yrs old, I called my Dad in the middle of the night telling him I was having severe pains in my chest and he took me to the ER. The attending physician that evening told my Dad there was nothing wrong with me and that I was just trying to get out of going to school the next day. Which was not at all the case. I ended up getting an emergency med flight to Wright Patterson AFB hospital to get my gallbladder removed. I remember my Dad feeling so bad afterwards, that he had trusted this Dr over his daughters word. I was never quite as trusting of hospitals after that incident. This book changed my mind. I see now that there are caring doctors who do want to help and no matter how odd or unrelated the symptoms may be, they listen and do their best to come up with a proper diagnosis. I recommend this book. I received this product in exchange for a review. All my opinions are my own, based on my personal experience with the product. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255: Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising.

No dislikes !! The author comes straight-forward with his theme--ANEW TEACHING PARADIGM FOR MEDICAL EDUCATORS. The author expresses the age-old paradigm of medical teaching-"Apostolic(dictatorial or egoistic) teaching", as opposed to the Socratic method of "question and answer". Further he expounds a look at the patient through observant eyes and an open ear, "listen"-an asset lost by many practioners (by "apostolic teaching" and adherence to the "biomolecular model").SUO is written with clarity, ,an objective and organized style, concise and using the English language, many foreign practitioners may need to use a dictionary, though the author speaks well in the vernacular.Finally, the author speaks of physical/mental treatment of the patient--the word "mental"-"religious" pop into the reader's mind-"psychological". I believe the author reaches for the word "spiritual" in both treatment and writing. A sequel by the author on the latter would be interesting.In summary, the author expresses a new paradigm in medical education. Years ahead of his educational peers, the "inertia" of Medical Education will probably slow him.This book is a "must read" for medical educators, interesting for all medical practionersStan Sanders, MD

I would like to thank the author, Dr. Clifton K. Meador, for providing me with a copy of this book to review. Symptoms of Unknown Origin: A Medical Odyssey details exceptions to the prevailing

viewpoint of doctors, which is that the best way to diagnose and treat patients is by using the biomolecular model of disease. The author, a medical doctor with more than 50 years of experience, came to the realization that there is not always a disease responsible for a patient's symptoms. He feels that it is important to not separate mind and body, as this provides too restrictive of a view of a possible diagnosis. As far as Symptoms of Unknown Origin (or SUO) are concerned, there are some patients for whom a medical explanation is not readily apparent despite the symptoms they are displaying. Dr. Meador is a great storyteller and, I can imagine, has a wonderful bedside manner for his patients. With interesting case studies to emphasize his point, the author proves that not all symptoms are indicative of disease. Environmental, mental, and extenuating causes all have a part to play in the health and wellness of us all. I would recommend this book to medical professionals, medical enthusiasts, or to those patients for whom this perspective would be helpful.

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