

The best book for Medicine applicants?

Among the many books that might be recommended, one stands out for its insight into issues involving patients and colleagues. It is also written in a clear and engaging way: it uses illuminating examples based on the author's experience of training to become a surgeon after reading English at Edinburgh.

Direct Red : a Surgeon's Story

by Gabriel Weston

Vintage 2010 (£7.99)

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Each chapter could be taken as the basis for a seminar discussion.

(1) Speed

1. How fast should a surgeon work?

(2) Sex

2. How does a doctor cope with the potential embarrassment of touching a patient's sexual organs?
3. How does a doctor cope with sexual feelings towards/from patients and colleagues?

(3) Death

4. What is the relationship between a trainee doctor and the cadaver dissected over a long period of time?
5. How does a doctor cope with the approaching death of a young person?

(4) Voices

6. How does a doctor cope with communicating with a patient who has an interpreter to help him/her communicate?
7. How does a doctor deal with the situation of a patient's "supporter" speaking on the patient's behalf, while the patient remains silent?
8. How far should a surgeon try to respect a patient's wishes?

(5) Beauty

9. How far is the principle of order important in surgery?
10. Is surgery aesthetically pleasing?

(6) Hierarchy

11. How does a medical student avoid feeling excessive pride?
12. What pressures are involved for a registrar surgeon making a diagnosis?

(7) Territory

13. In what circumstances might a doctor be under pressure to sacrifice duty to a patient to duty to herself/himself?
14. When should a doctor expect to intervene when off duty?

(8) Emergencies

15. How does a doctor learn to hide his/her shock from a patient?

16. What is the anthropology of an A&E department?
17. How should a doctor attempt to offer comfort to a psychiatric patient or an assault victim?

(9) Ambition

18. How far does a doctor's status within a hospital interfere with her/his treatment of a patient?

(10) Help

19. What problems of communication might occur among members of a medical team?
20. When might a junior doctor feel disinclined to ask a senior doctor for help?
21. What techniques might be used in handling an uncooperative patient?

(11) Children

22. In what ways does a surgeon have to combine roughness with gentleness?
23. In what ways might a tired doctor behave differently from one who is not tired?

(12) Appearances

24. When is cosmetic surgery appropriate?

(13) Changes

25. What problems are there with a system of specialists in the medical profession?
26. How does a doctor remain alert to the possibility that a patient has come to see him/her for a reason other than the one initially given?

(14) Home

27. How might a doctor try to establish a home-work balance?