

BOOK REVIEW

No easy path: Shane Neilson's "Call Me Doctor"

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Shane Neilson's "Call Me Doctor" outlines his experience as a medical student at Dalhousie University and his path to becoming a family physician. He narrates his encounters with Dalhousie's "boot-out committee," his residency in rural Newfoundland, and his struggles with mental illness. Shane Neilson left his home province of New Brunswick at the age of nineteen to start a life-long journey in medicine. The stated purpose of his book is to demonstrate to future medical students, essentially, what not to do. His story is a worthwhile read for people considering or currently enrolled in medical school. The book would be especially interesting for Dalhousie medical students who will recognize, if not identify with, many of Neilson's experiences.

"Call Me Doctor" is a personal memoir. Through the author's recounted experiences in medical school, the reader forms the image of an immature student who has no respect for the formalities and courtesies expected of medical students. His hostile attitude and constant efforts to be different nearly result in an expulsion from the school. This forces one to question his sheer suitability for the medical profession. The reader can easily sense his disdain for the "system," which he describes as quadrilateral and comprised of professors, fellow students, nurses, and patients.

However, as the narrative progresses, so do Neilson's attitude and maturity level. He attributes much of this shift to the positive influence of a physician mentor and argues that it is "the physician mentors who have the greatest impact on the prospective doctor." It was his experiences with his mentor at a family practice clinic that taught him "the grand secret to becoming a good doctor is in trying to be a good doctor." One would certainly hope that this most basic tenet was a "grand secret" only to Neilson and not to medical students in general. However, medical students should take note of Neilson's apperception that patients "teach doctors the best lessons," proven by multiple stories of formative patient interactions.

Dr. Neilson openly shares his personal challenges with mental illness, which serves to remind the reader that doctors are very much human and certainly not infallible. He makes a convincing argument that a physician should identify first as an individual, then as a doctor. His advice to prospective

medical candidates to "have some life experience before you apply" seems to be very sound.

Overall, "Call Me Doctor" is an interesting and entertaining read in which Neilson recounts his experiences in a candid and vivid manner. This memoir will likely cause his readers to change their perceptions of him from an immature medical student to that of a strong, empathetic, and capable clinician. The book helps the reader understand the process of becoming a physician and is extremely relevant to those pursuing a career in medicine.

