

family. This should be an impossible mission on its own, let alone when combined with the demands of marriage and a young family. Dr. Au summarizes this point beautifully when she states, “I now have two full-time jobs—residency and parenthood—each of which demand my complete attention, almost all of my waking hours, and both of which society has drilled into me are my first, most important priorities. The stakes are huge. [Halfway] efforts at either would be unacceptable.” It is good to know that I’m not alone.

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**Healer: A Novel.** By Carol Cassella, M.D. New York, Simon and Schuster, 2010. Pages: 320. Price: \$15.00.

*Healer*, written by Carol Cassella, M.D., is a novel about a family’s financial rise and fall and their subsequent interactions with unlikely heroes. This is the second book for Dr. Cassella, the first being the critically acclaimed *Oxygen*, which won rave reviews among anesthesiologists for its anesthesiology-based plot. *Healer* is another enjoyable read by Dr. Cassella.

Addison Boehning is a rising star in the pharmaceutical industry. His discovery of a potentially life-saving drug has catapulted Addison to a position of wealth and prestige. His wife, Claire, and their 14-yr-old daughter, Jory, grow accustomed to living as if there is a never-ending supply of money to fund their wide variety of activities. As Addison’s drug undergoes clinical trials, complications arise that send the Boehning family spiraling into financial ruin. They sell their spacious, upscale home in Seattle and move to their small, rundown vacation home in rural Hallum. The move is devastating to Jory, who has left her friends, her ballet lessons, and all that encompassed her privileged teenage life. As she learns that the move is not as temporary as she had hoped, she revels in her anger and finds solace only in her limited time with her father. Addison puts all of his time and energy into securing an investor that can help move the clinical trials of his drug forward. He is a risk-taker by nature, which has been a source of both intrigue and frustration for Claire. He attends various medical conferences and meetings, gambling their minimal funds wining and dining potential investors. Claire realizes that she will need to find a job to help bridge the financial gap. Having left the field of medicine during her residency to care for Jory as a baby, she knows that her résumé is less than stellar. She finds work in the local public health clinic where most of the patients are immigrants struggling to make ends meet. The only physician at the clinic is Dan Zelaya, who decides to overlook the gaps on Claire’s résumé and hire her. Dan becomes more than Claire’s boss;

he is her mentor and friend. They develop a relationship of mutual trust and dependence. Claire also befriends a local immigrant woman named Miguela. Miguela is a hard-working, intelligent woman on a quest to learn the truth about her family. As their lives intersect, Claire and Miguela learn about fate, friendship, and the power of healing. It is through the clinic that a potential investor for Addison’s drug emerges and Addison and Claire are thrust into an emotional battle of ethics. It seems that they were destined for the possible solutions before them, but before they can press forward, they must put all of the pieces together.

*Healer* is written for a wide audience. With or without a medical background, readers can relate to the multiple story lines woven within the pages. The friction between Addison and Claire in handling their financial and emotional situation, the emotion generated by Miguela’s past, and the compassion shown at the public health clinic by Dan and the staff are all important elements of this novel. *Healer* is written in a manner that will make the reader take personal inventory of his or her own ethics and values and will provoke thought about the way each character reflects and challenges another. The power of money is intense, but the benefits of healing are many.

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**Cutting for Stone.** By Abraham Verghese, M.D., M.A.C.P. New York, Vintage Books, 2009. ISBN-13: 978-0-375-71436-8, ISBN-10: 0375714367. Pages: 688. Price: \$15.95.

*Cutting for Stone* is a novel written from the first-person perspective of Marion Stone, one of the identical twins born of a secret affair between a beautiful Indian nun and a British surgeon. A series of catastrophic events occur during their births, leading to their father’s abandonment and life-altering changes to the staff of Missing Hospital. Set in Ethiopia beginning in the 1950s, the story chronicles the twins as they grow up amid the perils of a volatile country on the verge of revolution.

The “true” meaning behind the title *Cutting for Stone* is debatable. A simple explanation is that the main characters have the last name Stone and are practicing surgeons of varying degree. Looking deeper, *Cutting for Stone* is an excerpt from a passage of the Hippocratic Oath, which all physicians recite either directly or through modernized versions during their respective commencements. The direct passage mentioned in the novel, “I will not cut for stone, even for patients in whom the disease is manifested. I will leave this operation to be performed by practitioners, specialists in this art.” The original passage refers to the practice of lithotomy, or “cutting for the stone,” which appears in records from the ancient