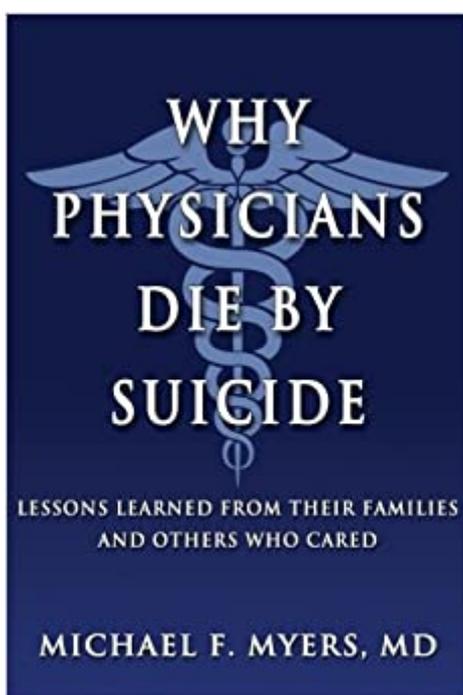


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# Why Physicians Die By Suicide: Lessons Learned From Their Families And Others Who Cared



## Synopsis

Physicians are known to be a group of professionals who are at risk of taking their own lives. In this easy-to-read book, Dr. Michael Myers, a psychiatrist and specialist in physician health, attempts to explain the mystery of why some doctors, despite their calling and the adoration of their families, patients, students and colleagues, perish by suicide. He combines the powerful and gripping insights of dozens of bereaved people whom he interviewed for this project with disguised stories from his decades long clinical practice to shed some light on this national tragedy. The stigma attached to mental illness in doctors is ubiquitous and pernicious – and, because untreated illness is one of the major drivers to suicide, Dr. Myers argues that stigma must be fought with urgency and might. He makes across-the-board recommendations in an effort to prevent suicide in physicians and concludes that everyone has a role to play in saving a doctor’s life. This is a book about heartbreak, loss, prevailing, growth, passion and hope. It’s a book for doctors themselves, their families, those who train them, those who treat them and those who care about them.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

’Dr Myers provides a unique insight into physician suicide. He uses personal experience; clinical and research skills, to explore one of the most under researched and taboo areas in suicide prevention. Every physician should read this compelling book, which highlights the need for self-care and self-preservation, as they often face the same insecurities and vulnerabilities as those they care for.’  
’Dr. Sharon McDonnell Director of Suicide Bereavement UK’, who have never stopped looking for answers to the ‘why’ of Harry’s suicide even after more than 25 years since his death, raced through these pages with nods of recognition and pauses of

gratitude for my deeper knowledge of the unique circumstances that influence the suicide of a physician, including that of my husband." Carla Fine, author, *No Time to Say Goodbye: Surviving the Suicide of a Loved One* "This is a signature book for physicians, their families, those who train them and those who treat them. In tackling one of the biggest medical challenges of our time - physician depression and suicide, Dr. Myers has combined his lifelong clinical experience as a "doctors' doctor" with gripping anecdotes of families who have lost a physician loved one to suicide. By vividly describing the context, the culture of medicine, the impact of stigma and through the use of compelling personal narratives, Dr. Myers has opened the door to a topic that has been hidden in the shadows of shame and silence for decades. In addition to describing the problem, Dr. Myers offers practical solutions and reminds us all that we can make a difference in the lives of our patients and those we love." Carol A. Bernstein, MD, Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Vice Chair for Education and Director of Residency Training, New York University School of Medicine, Past President, American Psychiatric Association "There could not be a more timely and informative piece of work on the topic of physician suicide. While public attitudes are opening up to the importance of a proactive approach to mental health, physicians continue to take their lives at a rate higher than the general population. With hard-earned compassion and insight, Dr. Myers guides the reader through the many aspects that contribute to physician suicide. Using a broad ranging lens to examine the reasons for the increased risk among physicians, including science, history, and cultural perspectives, the most valuable lens is the vast depth of Dr. Myers' experience based on decades of working with physicians with mental health problems and who have struggled or tragically succumbed to suicide. Using personal narrative, and case examples alongside a scholarly approach, the effect is a readable, moving and critically important resource for medical educators and anyone who is touched by physician suicide." Christine Moutier, MD, Chief Medical Officer, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

Dr. Myers is a Professor of Clinical Psychiatry and Immediate Past Vice-Chair Education and Director of Training in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at SUNY Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn, New York. He is also a recent past President of the New York City Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. He is the author or co-author of seven previous books, including *Touched by Suicide: Hope and Healing after Loss* (with Carla Fine) and *The Physician as Patient: A Clinical Handbook for Mental Health Professionals* (with Glen Gabbard, MD). He is a specialist in physician health.

Dr. Myers has delved into perhaps the most under-discussed and critical issue plaguing the physician workforce. His work is courageous, informative, and guided by rich narrative interviews from doctors, colleagues and loved ones. The overall message is simple, we cannot allow ourselves or those around us to become isolated especially in our field of work. To quote Dr. Myers, "I've never heard anyone ever say that when their time comes, they hope they are all alone." The details, messages, and practical lessons of this book are its greatest strength. I am currently in a leadership position for resident physicians and we know that the prevalence of suicidal thoughts and depression is much higher than is acceptable amongst our trainees. This book has helped me tremendously to enhance my understanding of the phenomenon of doctor suicide, its causes and its devastating impact on those left behind. Thank you for such a thoughtful, timely, and important contribution to a still under-recognized issue amongst our providers.

I highly recommend this powerful, supportive, erudite, gloves-off book from an esteemed world authority we are all fortunate and grateful to have in Dr Myers. This compelling fusion of tear-jerking, heart-breaking personal narratives from the voices of those that have been left behind are beautifully and seamlessly facilitated by this vastly experienced, knowledgeable, compassionate doctors' doctor to produce an uplifting and inspiring must-have book. This caring and moving tome is a torch that leads the way forward by shining a bright light on the darkness that is perhaps the last great taboo in our society, the potential lethal combination of stigma and stigmatization of mental illness. There really is no them and us comes across loud and clear to all that choose to listen. A journey from tears of pain and sadness, to tears of optimism and hope. A book that, dare I say, will need to be read by all of us sooner or later during our hectic and frenetic lives which fits just as well on the coffee table, the book store, the student desk, the shelves of the universities and an important resource for the medical training facilities of the Royal Colleges. Dave Emson, survivor

I have read Dr. Myers book and found it to be a wonderful mixture of experiential learning from interview and communications from survivors and families and a scholarly review what is known about this tragic outcome that can affect too many of our physicians throughout the country. It is an important read for all of us in medicine so as to try to minimize the occurrence of these tragedies. Henry Grass MD Psychiatrist

Dr. Myers delivers a wake-up call in this short easy to read book. We learn that physicians are human. Just like everyone else, they hurt, they can burn out, they can sink into depression and

sadly more than any other group see suicide as their only out. These are always tragic deaths but the secrecy, denial, stigma works to keep the impaired physician from seeking the help (s)he needs or even family and colleagues from reaching out. Dr. Myers shows us how we can save lives by banishing these negatives and telling us what can be done by all of us “ therapists, physicians, families and the rest of us. Suicide can be prevented. Dr. Myers has convinced me. Alice Herb, JD, LL.M, Emerita Clinical Professor, Bioethics SUNY Downstate Medical Center

A profound, important and beautiful work that heals and guides the medical profession regarding this too often unaddressed issue. Dr. Myers writing is at the core of what it means to be a healer and psychiatrist, recognizing the need to address the challenges physicians face receiving help themselves given their professional identity while still remaining human. His clinical vignettes stayed with me, helping me understand the various challenges different types of physicians face through the course of a medical career. It is a gift of compassion and understanding to physicians and to those touched by loss through suicide.

This is an important and timely book, exploring in a sensitive but frank way a phenomenon that has been ignored for too long. Mike Myers possesses both the wealth of experience and the critical judgement to speak with authority, an authority that is essential to write about suicide in such an elite professional group that has historically protected its privacy. I read it with interest, sorrow, and recognition (not from personal experience but from studying the historical context). This is a book to inspire change.

Dr. Myers has amassed an outstanding collection of the recollections of survivors of physician suicide. Their stories bring awareness of one of medical education's untold scourges...the unnecessary negative aspects that result from sleep deprivation, demeaning instruction from those who should serve as trusted mentors, and the failure to encourage budding physicians to keep close watch over their own physical and mental health. This work is spot on and should be required reading in every medical school.

Powerful book - highly recommend the book to physicians, educators, administrators and executive leaders in health care organization to help understand the reasons and remedies of this preventable tragic outcome. The author deconstructs the melody and delves into each sub-topic with beautiful narrative examples. Very engaging read.

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