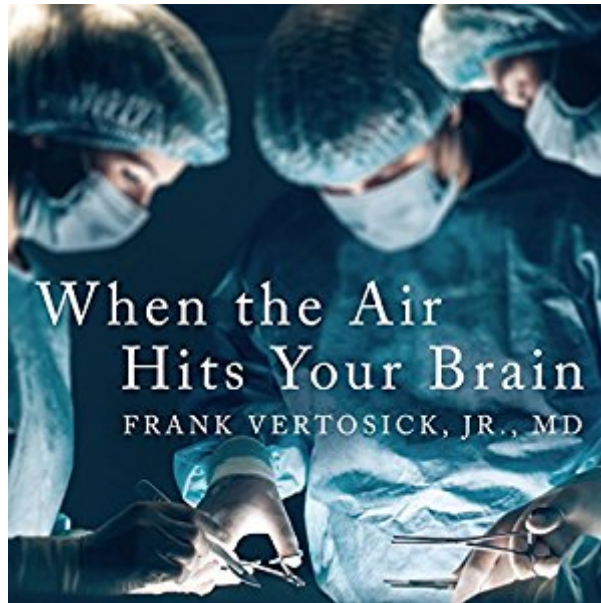




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When The Air Hits Your Brain: Tales From Neurosurgery



Synopsis

With poignant insight and humor, Frank Vertosick, Jr., MD, describes some of the greatest challenges of his career, including a six-week-old infant with a tumor in her brain, a young man struck down in his prime by paraplegia, and a minister with a .22-caliber bullet lodged in his skull. Told through intimate portraits of Vertosick's patients and unsparing-yet-fascinatingly detailed descriptions of surgical procedures, *When the Air Hits Your Brain* - the culmination of decades spent struggling to learn an unforgiving craft - illuminates both the mysteries of the mind and the realities of the operating room.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

At times it's sad. At other times it's unsettling. Parts even make you laugh. It's as much a journey into the humanity of the world of neurosurgery, and the path to becoming a neurosurgeon, as it is a foray into the raw experience of the operating room. The fragile tissue that houses the self is exposed at the risk of irreversible, terminal consequences, a risk that's overshadowed enough by the alternative to make it worthwhile. Well written. Gripping.

When the Air Hits Your Brain: Tales from Neurosurgery by Dr. Frank Vertosick Jr., M.D. *Tales from Neurosurgery* I took a break from my quest to re-read my library of books with an eye towards reviewing them on my blog, .com and Goodreads to venture into the realm of a new book. I chose *When the Air Hits Your Brain: Tales from Neurosurgery* not from any specific recommendation but

because of the reviews on .com. I normally don't do this but I figured it was worth a shot. And I'm glad I did. Dr. Vertosick is a great author (or he has a damned good editor; either one will do) and has a very inviting style of writing about very complex subjects. He doesn't go into great medical details, instead, he gives you enough to understand the problem he goes into what was done and how he felt about it. I especially enjoyed his time in England and really appreciated the differences between the two views of medicine. I had to laugh when one of the senior doctors talked in disparaging ethnic terms about a patient, something Dr. Vertosick said wouldn't fly in America. I appreciated his comment because I found that some of the European sports commentators would say things that would have gotten them yanked off the air in the US. I found myself reading his chapter on his pediatric patient Rebecca twice because it touched my heart. His other patients were equally fascinating including the Viet Nam vet with the blown aneurism. This is a highly recommended book. It's an easy read (as compared to the previously reviewed book *When Illness Strikes the Leader: The Dilemma of the Captive King* by Professor Robert S. Robins and Dr. Jerrold Post M.D. written more for the academics in us) and a compelling read. I found it hard to turn away when lunch time was over. I read the electronic version mostly on my iPad mini and my iPhone. I'm assuming that W. W. Norton did the electronic version, which I found (as opposed to *Treating the Brain: What the Best Doctors Know*) to be fairly decent though I really hated the fact that it was justified text and wished publishers would not do this as it makes reading difficult and hyphenation impossible. I did find a few mistakes such as run on words, but nothing was a show stopper such as with the aforementioned book. I'd recommend this book to anyone who is interested in first-person accounts of "How I became a Doctor," those interested in surgeons and surgery, brain surgery and some neurology thrown in for good measure. I give this book 4.5 stars as a good solid read for those of us who enjoy this kind of tome. My next foray is back to my library and hardcover books is *A Brief History of Disease, Science and Medicine* by Michael T. Kennedy. I really enjoyed it the first time and am curious as to how it stands up to time and a second read.

Wow. Reading this account of the author's work as a neurosurgeon brought two thoughts to mind: one is that neurosurgeons are really God's gift to the medical community despite any disparaging comments by other medical professionals and the other is why would anyone want to do this. What sets this book apart is the author's humanity. He is not afraid to show his own, warts and all, but what sets his book apart is his willingness to address the humanity of the people who he performs

surgery on---both before and after the surgery. He has to put a certain clinical distance between himself and his patients to do what he does, but he never forgets that these are real human beings with families and lives to live. They are not lab animals or computer simulations to be forgotten once the procedures are done and he has to live with the results, both good and bad. Some of the stories he relates actually brought tears to my eyes. It may have been because my 11 year old granddaughter recently had brain surgery to remove a tumor, but I think it was more than that. Neurosurgeons actually touch and try to heal the very essence of what makes one human with the ability to heal and the ability to destroy a life depending on how they wield their tools while inside the skull. How one lives with knowing that and living it every day is what makes this a great book.

As an doctor currently working in neurosurgery and hoping to fashion a life long career in neurosurgery, I found this book a wonderful read. I wish my friends and family could read this book and perhaps it could make them understand the breathtaking highs and the gut wrenching lows of medicine and in particular neurosurgery. It is a fascinating story with experiences and emotions we all have gone through as a rite of passage. Enjoyed it thoroughly for its content. Recommended for all who are fascinated by medicine and it should be mandatory for all neurosurgeons to read.

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