

Putting the CARE Back in Health Care

Greg Scandlen

Passion for Patients

By Lee Beecher, MD (with Dave Racer, MLitt)
262 pages, Alethos Press, St. Paul, Minnesota



This book could not be more timely, from my point of view. It is a perfect companion to my *Myth Busters* book. Where my book looks at the failure of evolving public policy in health care from the 20,000-foot level, this book looks at the same phenomena from the ground level – the impact on patients and especially on physicians.

Sadly, it is a grim tale. Dr. Beecher seems like a wonderful man and a caring (“passionate”) psychiatrist. He has been through it all. He has been the medical director at a managed care plan (Preferred One) in Minnesota. He has been a member of the national legislative committee for the American Psychiatric Association (APA). He served on the committee that developed the RBRVS method of paying physicians on behalf of Medicare. Through it all he maintained a private practice and it was the caring relations he had with his patients that kept him grounded.

The book is not an easy read. In fact, it is painful to be at his side as he tries to maintain his integrity while jumping through all the changing hoops required by the government and managed care bureaucrats. All he really wants to do is provide care for the patients he loves, but it becomes ever harder to do that as the bureaucracy and the administrative burden grows.

He finally transforms his practice into a direct pay model, refusing to have anything to do with insurance companies or Medicare. His patients are more than willing to pay him for the services he provides. They determine that his services are valuable and gladly pay him. Should they decide his services are no longer valuable to them they will stop seeing him. Simple.

The arrangement solves many of the problems the bureaucracy has created, including:

- Patient privacy. The transaction between Dr. Beecher is nobody’s business but the doctor and the patient.
- Payment system reform. He is paid on a fee-for-service basis, just like most of the American economy. There is no confusion.
- Administrative costs. There are virtually none. Dr. Beecher employs one person to make appointments and keep the books.
- Information technology. Dr. Beecher uses only the technology that makes sense for his office, in most cases handwritten notes, which he shares with the patient.

Most important is Dr. Beecher’s joy at being free to do the very best for each of his patients. The best part of the book is the last three chapters where he describes the various forms direct pay can take according to the preferences of each physician and the needs of the specific patients being treated. There is no cookie cutter model that works for all, or even most, situations.

Overall, this book is a wonderful depiction of one man’s journey through the maze of the modern health care system and the discovery at the end that what really matters in health care is love.

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*Greg Scandlen’s career of writing, studying, speaking and leading the discourse on medical care reform spans more than 40 years. He organized the Council for Affordable Health Insurance, and contributed to the launch of Medical Savings Accounts. With stints at the Cato Institute, the National Center for Policy Analysis, and the Galen Institute, he eventually formed Consumers for Health Care Choices, now housed at the Heartland Institute. Greg released his first book, *MythBusters: Why Health Reform Always Goes Awry*,ⁱ in 2017.*

ⁱ Scandlen, Greg. *Myth Busters: Why Health Reform Always Goes Awry*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017.