
PHYSICIAN'S BOOKSHELF

House Call

**By Darden Hays North, MD
(Jackson, MS: Ponder House
Press, 2005. hardback. 345 pages.
\$24.95)**

We all know the gifted Dr. South, whose rapier-like pen drips wit and poetry. Now comes Dr. North with a first novel. *What to think?* No Civil War or War of the Sections here; in fact, North and South share much in common. Both are talented writers and practicing physicians. And both are writing prose that should be read.

Dr. North— Darden Hays North, that is— recently published the book *House Call*. The novel is a work of contemporary fiction, more precisely a murder mystery, set in a Mississippi medical setting. North's day job since 1986 has been that of a board certified obstetrician and gynecologist, working as a partner at Jackson Healthcare for Women. He has a full medical practice and serves as chairman of the board of Mississippi Health Partners. He was born in Jackson, reared in Cleveland, and then settled back in Jackson. He is married, with two children, and has a menagerie of animals. He is a member of this association and belongs to Central Mississippi Medical Society. The image of William Carlos Williams, waiting on a baby's arrival, scratching poems on nearby prescription pads, comes to mind when contemplating how North accomplished the feat of this fine thriller.

The narrative is exciting and well-done. He paints vividly his characters and the medical environment.



The character who opens up the action is the sympathetic

Dr. Darden H. North has written "House Call," his first novel. He practices obstetrics and gynecology in Jackson.

Taylor Richards, a beautiful experienced OB nurse approaching work burnout, before her grisly death. North's other characters, especially the young protagonist Dr. Knox Chamblee and the self-centered Dr. Hawes, who mistreats her nurses and pampers her patients, are drawn true to life. Docs will recognize the hospital hallways, a world of scrubs, shrill overhead intercom systems, hospital

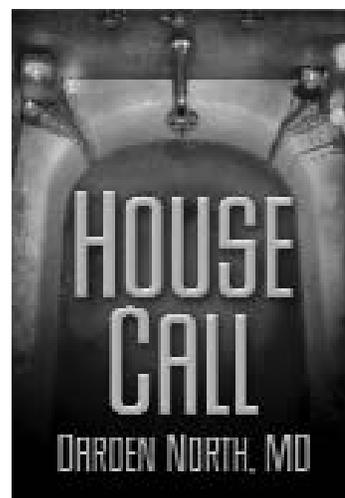
badges, and jumping over "wet floor" signs. His word invention, "horrendioma" (page 43) may start a verbal fad.

However, North's skill as a writer alone is not what makes the novel live. It is his background, his daily grind as a physician, his intimate, first-hand knowledge of the interworkings and bizarre dynamics of hospital staff relationships and those of medical partners, who often have very different approaches to the practice of medicine. Ours is a profession of big egos and arrogance, as well as compassion, hard labor, and self-sacrifice. His medical knowledge comes through in extraordinary descriptions of deliveries, surgeries, and anatomy. (Such is my major complaint with most "medical thrillers" not written by MDs.) The physician perspective is essential for the "truth" of medical fiction.

This is truly an enjoyable book for the physician-reader. By the way, the publisher deserves special notice for producing such an attractive book, a sturdy hardback with a color foil jacket. The book is available at most Mississippi bookstores and the computer savvy can find out more at www.dardennorth.com.

North's first novel has appeared and is heartily recommended. We await anxiously his future offerings.

—Lucius Lampton, MD, Editor



The Physician's Bookshelf recommends Dr. Darden North's "House Call," a fictional murder mystery set in a Southern community.