



First, Do No Harm: The Dramatic Story of Real Doctors and Patients Making Impossible Choices at a Big-City Hospital

By Lisa Belkin

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"A powerful, true story of life and death in a major metropolitan hospital...Harrowing... An important book."

THE NEW YORK TIMES

What is life worth? And what is a life worth living? At a time when America faces vital choices about the future of its health care, former NEW YORK TIMES correspondent Lisa Belkin takes a powerful and poignant look at the inner workings of Hermann Hospital in Houston, Texas, telling the remarkable, real-life stories of the doctors, patients, families, and hospital administrators who must ask--and ultimately answer--the most profound and heart-rending questions about life and death.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In novelistic detail, Belkin examines the cases of several patients in a Houston hospital and the ethical considerations of their doctors.

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From School Library Journal

YA-- A look at medical ethics and the critical-care decisions made by the ethics committee, doctors, and four sets of patients/parents at Hermann Hospital in Texas between May-October 1988. Quality of life is measured against longevity and consideration is given to expenditure of limited resources. As most of these patients were children or young adults, the book has immediacy for high school students. The epilogue, written four years later, brings closure to decisions made. Young people interested in medicine or the health-care crisis are sure to find this involving.

- *Barbara Hawkins, Oakton High School, Fairfax, VA*

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From Library Journal

Taking her title from the physicians' Hippocratic Oath, Belkin, who covers medical issues for the New York Times, spent nearly three years with the Hermann Hospital Ethics Committee in Houston, Texas, researching this provocative book on medical ethics. The daily, convulsive questions of life and death that the committee struggles with are often questions without answers, yet they are somehow answered at the Hermann Hospital and in hospitals across the country every single day. Belkin quotes a Chinese proverb: if you save a life, you are responsible for it. The cruel, deceptively simple wisdom of this proverb is brought home on nearly every page of this entirely true, gripping, and dramatic account of how medical chance and technology trap the unsuspecting in a vise of brutal decision-making. Totally engrossing and highly recommended. For a theological perspective on medical ethics, see the review of *Theological Voices in Medical Ethics* on p. 122.

- *James Swanton, Albert Einstein Coll. of Medicine, New York*

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