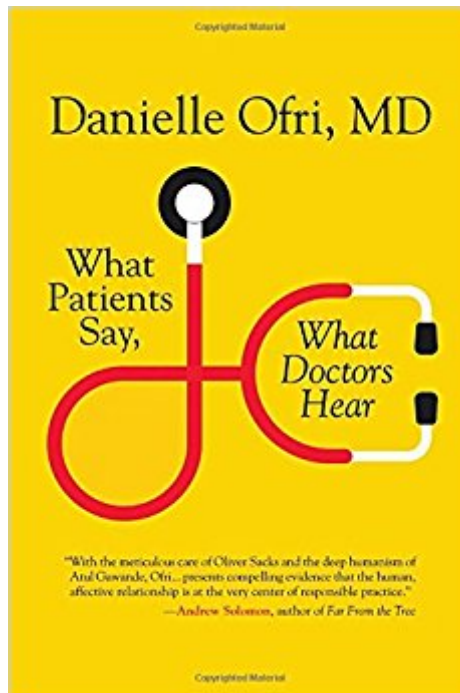




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# What Patients Say, What Doctors Hear



## Synopsis

Can refocusing conversations between doctors and their patients lead to better health? Despite modern medicine's infatuation with high-tech gadgetry, the single most powerful diagnostic tool is the doctor-patient conversation, which can uncover the lion's share of illnesses. However, what patients say and what doctors hear are often two vastly different things. Patients, anxious to convey their symptoms, feel an urgency to "make their case" to their doctors. Doctors, under pressure to be efficient, multitask while patients speak and often miss the key elements. Add in stereotypes, unconscious bias, conflicting agendas, and fear of lawsuits and the risk of misdiagnosis and medical errors multiplies dangerously. Though the gulf between what patients say and what doctors hear is often wide, Dr. Danielle Ofri proves that it doesn't have to be. Through the powerfully resonant human stories that Dr. Ofri's writing is renowned for, she explores the high-stakes world of doctor-patient communication that we all must navigate. Reporting on the latest research studies and interviewing scholars, doctors, and patients, Dr. Ofri reveals how better communication can lead to better health for all of us.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Her revealing doctor-patient stories often make her seem like the doctor that every patient wishes they had, and she draws on patient accounts to illustrate the problems that can arise in communication between doctor and patient. This book, however, goes far beyond Ofri's personal experiences with patients. She delves into the relevant research on communication, citing some ingenious experiments on listening...A much-needed, convincing argument that, regarding

doctor-patient communication, the stakes are very high and that what patients say is all too often not what doctors hear—and vice versa. •Library Journal “With disarming candor and penetrating insight, Dr. Ofri illuminates the enormous power of what might seem at first a mundane and insignificant element in the practice of medicine:

communication. •Deborah Tannen, professor of linguistics at Georgetown University and author of *You Just Don’t Understand* and *You’re Wearing*

THAT? “With the meticulous care of Oliver Sacks and the deep humanism of Atul Gawande, Danielle Ofri has written a book about the role of communication in medicine. She presents

compelling evidence that even as doctoring appears to be dominated by technology, the human, affective relationship is at the very center of responsible practice. •Andrew

Solomon, author of *Far from the Tree* Praise for Danielle Ofri “Taut, vivid prose...She writes

for a lay audience with a practiced hand. •Katie Hafner, *New York Times* “A gifted storyteller. •Sarah Halzack, *Washington Post* “The world of patient

and doctor exists in a special sacred space. Danielle Ofri brings us into that place where science and the soul meet. Her vivid and moving prose enriches the mind and turns the

heart. •Jerome Groopman, author of *How Doctors Think* “I highly

recommend [Danielle Ofri’s work] for physicians, would-be doctors, and anyone interested in medicine in all its behind-the-scenes glory. •Sandeep Jauhar, author of *Intern: A*

*Doctor’s Initiation* “Danielle Ofri’s sensitivity to every aspect of her patients’ lives is immensely impressive and moving. If only more doctors could be (and

write) like this! •Oliver Sacks, author of *Awakenings* “[Ofri’s writing] about the emotional life of doctors and their patients, captivated me so much...Read[s] like a deftly

crafted and luminously written novel. •Caroline Leavitt, *Boston Globe*

Danielle Ofri, MD, PhD, is an associate professor of medicine at the New York University School of Medicine and has cared for patients at New York’s Bellevue Hospital for more than two decades. She is the author of, most recently, *What Doctors Feel: How Emotions Affect the Practice of Medicine*, as well as the critically acclaimed *Singular Intimacies*, *Incidental Findings*, *Medicine in Translation*, and the e-book original volume *Intensive Care*. Writing in the *Guardian* in the spring of 2016, Andrew Solomon singled out Ofri as the only woman among an extraordinary new generation of doctor writers, saying, “Ofri has produced four impressive books and numerous articles, all striking for their reversion to empathy, their willingness to sense not only the physical life of a patient, but also the emotional. • She lives in New York City.

I found it refreshing that a doctor would be so concerned with communication with patients that she would go to this much trouble to research the literature, interview patients and doctors and suggest that this simple tool is as valuable to successful medical outcomes as any other medical procedure. Dr. Ofri invites us to witness the lives of several remarkable people who are defined not by their illness but rather by their character and she highlights how a clarity in understanding of the patient's needs is far more important than knowing just the person's malady. She juxtaposes the barriers doctors face in communicating with patients with the desire of patients to be given the best possible treatment. On the patient's behalf, she quotes the author Anatole Broyard who wrote "To the typical physician, my illness is a routine incident in his rounds, while for me it's the crisis of my life." She goes on to say that rather than seeing the conversation between doctor and patient as the utilitarian humdrum of a visit, the conversation should be viewed as the single most important tool of medical care. The book is written in an engaging style with perhaps a few too many forced metaphors. I enjoyed reading it and wish it became widely read by those in the medical field.

Another fascinating book by Danielle Ofri. She argues persuasively that the conversation between doctor and patient is the key to successful diagnosis and treatment. In addition to vignettes of her interactions with patients, she includes a fascinating discussion of "listening" that begins with advice from her cello teacher. There are other moments when she raises ethical issues of deception that provoke more thought in her readers.

I had the honor of meeting Dr. Ofri a number of years ago, when we were both students in a creative writing class, long before she became rich and famous (or at least, famous). Reading her work is a pleasure, accessible and deep, great reads, both for physicians and for normal people. Highly recommended.

As someone who has both worked with medical students and been a patient advocate I believe Dr. Ofri has nailed it! She tells stories and provides evidence to back up the idea that communication is key to a patient/health care provider relationship. I highly recommend this book for the layman, such as myself, who wants to better understand how to navigate the world of clinics and hospitals. She generously gives examples of tools, for all of us; doctors, nurses, specialists, and patients, to help ensure the best possible outcomes.

Dr. Ofri has written another great book about the importance of doctor and patient communication (I also loved her book, *What Doctors Feel*). Apart from being a great writer, Dr. Ofri has the ability to articulate the "inner voice" that all doctors possess. As a doctor reading this book, you will find that your own inner voice will come to life. It is also a great book for patients to read. The book demonstrates the powers of empathy and humility on patient care. It sets a standard for what patients should expect in their relationship with their doctors. Readers will come to see that healthcare consists of much more than medications or procedures. All this is done through interesting and well written stories that make the read effortless. Through these stories and anecdotes, a philosophy of patient care will emerge for the reader and alter the way he or she looks at medicine in the future. The reader will also be touched by the book's poignancy.

No matter at which end of the stethoscope you find yourself, Danielle Ofri's "*What Patients Say, What Doctors Hear*" will be of value to you. This highly accessible book offers many useful suggestions to aid patients in pursuit of receiving the best care from their doctor and doctors seeking to provide the best care that they can to their patients despite the overwhelming burdens of their work.

This important book talks about the most critical ingredient to ensure a positive patient/doctor relationship: communication. Both listening and talking by both the patient and physician is clearly the best medicine. Improved communication is a low cost, easy and proven strategy for affecting the health of our entire population. Spending more time talking and listening in the exam room is where the healing really begins. If Dr Ofri can do this working at Bellevue, one of the busiest and most complex hospitals in the heart of New York City then all doctors should be able to learn from her experience.

This is a great book. I bought a few copies: one for me, one for a doctor who listens and treats her patients the way they should be treated (as a thank you) and one which I slipped to a doctor who hasn't heard a word I've said for 9 years. I trust that all three of us understand that listening, truly hearing what each other are saying in a medical setting, provides the best health outcomes.

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