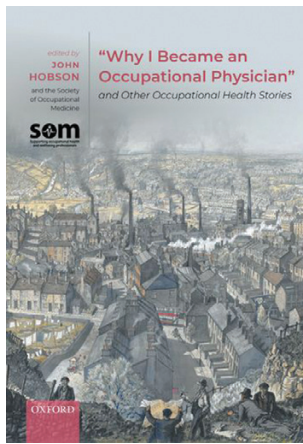


BOOK REVIEWS

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Why I Became an Occupational Physician and Other Occupational Health Stories

Edited by John Hobson and the Society of Occupational Medicine. Published by Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2020. ISBN: 9780198862543. Price: £29.99 (paperback and e-book). 288 pp.



For many years, I have enjoyed browsing the assorted and often fascinating ‘filler’ articles published in the journal *Occupational Medicine*. It was a pleasant surprise to discover that a collection of these writings has been released in the form of a single volume paperback (and also as an e-book) in July 2020. The book is edited by the respected John Hobson, honorary Editor of the journal *Occupational Medicine* between 2002 and 2018. John is a consultant occupational physician with academic appointments in occupational medicine at universities in Keele, Manchester, and Birmingham. He too has contributed several of the fillers.

The 198 items featured in this collection were written by more than a hundred contributors over a span of 15 years. It is not easy to be succinct and yet have an interesting and powerful message put across in the short space allocated to a filler (which is the blank space at the end of a full paper in the journal). The list of contributors reads like a Who’s Who in the world of occupational medicine. They hail from diverse regions with the large majority from the UK, but also from locations such as Ireland, Finland, Italy, the USA, Canada, the Far East and the Antipodes. Most have managed to beautifully craft nuggets that provide for captivating reading.

Among the gems in this book are a series that share the reasons why prominent occupational physicians ended up in their calling. For some, it was a natural career move, for others the choice was triggered by a specific event and some even stumbled upon their career by chance! While the revelations might vary, the stories told will resonate with many occupational physicians. Over the years the scope of the works became significantly broader in latitude and international perspectives, but all had the common feature of providing wonderful insights into the world of the occupational physician.

Each of the snippets offers something unique and distinctive—documenting historical moments, describing amusing exploits and inspiring experiences, and some sharing relatively unknown but intriguing facts relating to occupational health. The writings range from quiet musings to witty anecdotes and thought-provoking viewpoints. All are gathered together under the canopy of occupational medicine—a speciality often little understood or appreciated in the wider realm of health care and even amongst medical colleagues.

Several of the vignettes I found appealing were those on personalities such as Socrates (the Brazilian footballer, not the Greek philosopher), Arthur Conan Doyle and Che Guevara—all of whom practiced as medical doctors; a story of the ill-fated RMS Titanic with accompanying photographs; exotic occupational diseases and hazards such as vanadium poisoning, tiger attacks on rubber tappers, cryptococcus/aspergillus infection from the hide bags of bagpipers; and more contemporary issues relating to Internet addiction and social media use.

This volume will be a worthwhile read for occupational physicians who wish to appreciate the width, depth and richness of their profession. It will be an eye-opener for those exploring occupational medicine as a career, and an interesting introduction for any health professional who is curious about this medical specialty. Personally, it was a joy for me to re-visit many of the fillers—details of which I could still recall, and a treat to discover a number of pearls that I missed! I shall not only treasure my copy of this book, but will proudly share it with my son, who just qualified in medicine last year and is contemplating what to do next in his career.

Rating

★★★☆ (Buy and keep)

David Koh