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Dancing With Mr. D.



Synopsis

As cancer rates soar, and the issue of "self-deliverance" stays in the headlines, the American pre-occupation with death and dying has never been more intense. In this remarkable new book, Bert Keizer, a Dutch doctor with training in philosophy as well as medicine, probes these concerns with understanding and insight as he shares with us his extraordinary experiences among the terminally ill. We follow Keizer through his days at a nursing home in Holland as he listens to his patients' stories, documents their battle with disease, and witnesses their taking their own lives in order to die with dignity. All this is given counterpoint by the trio of doctors with whom Keizer works, whose outlooks range from detachment to despair to naive faith in the power of medicine. And throughout are Keizer's brilliant, often startling meditations on the nature of his work--shedding new light on such topics as the placebo effect, the oddness of the verb "to die," and, of course, euthanasia, which is legal in Holland. A surprise bestseller in Holland, where it was praised for its humanity, scope, and emotional power, *Dancing with Mr. D* is an inspiring and powerful narrative that vividly frames the issues we will all confront when we make our final journey.

Book Information

Hardcover: 336 pages

Publisher: Nan A. Talese / Doubleday; 1st edition (February 17, 1997)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0385484976

ISBN-13: 978-0385484978

Product Dimensions: 1.2 x 6.2 x 8.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 5 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,384,854 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #14 in [Books > Medical Books > Medicine > Euthanasia](#) #60 in [Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Psychology & Counseling > Medicine & Psychology](#) #93 in [Books > Medical Books > Psychology > Medicine & Psychology](#)

Customer Reviews

Keizer, a physician in a nursing home in Holland, where euthanasia has been legal for 20 years, recounts here his experiences with the terminally ill. A philosopher as well as a physician, he focuses on suffering, love, fear, and the other emotions that accompany dying. Many of his insightful observations concern the reactions of the physician called on to assist in a suicide, who is largely

ignored in many existing sources (some of which are listed in "Words of Comfort: Resources for the Living and Dying" LJ 8/96). A thought-provoking account that will move and enlighten any adult reader, particularly the healthcare provider, Keizer's work adds a new perspective to discussions about a major divisive issue in healthcare today. Readers should also consult such works as Herbert Hendin's *Seduced by Death: Doctors, Patients, and the Dutch Cure* (LJ 11/1/96) for an evaluation of the practice and for a bibliography. Margaret Norden, Marymount Univ. Lib., Arlington, Va. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Keizer, a physician at a Dutch nursing home, is responsible for arranging humane deaths for patients who seriously request them. He is on a nursing-home rather than a hospital staff because so many hospital physicians, he says, regard a patient's death as an insult. Most of his book--a Dutch best-seller--relates anecdotes about patients, especially those requesting assisted deaths. Keizer has put much more into this sympathetic, well-argued (mostly by means of examples), often surprisingly humorous book. He has us get to know each patient he discusses, and we learn much about his own disbelief in organized religion, his philosophy of life, and his deep caring for his patients and their families--a depth reflected in the way the stress involved in selecting patients for euthanasia causes Keizer periodic anxiety and troubling dreams. The euthanasia he practices is the quiet termination of lives that have become unbearable for any of a broad range of reasons: one patient asks, "How much will I have to give up, how much will be robbed from me, before I have finally reached the bottom?" William Beatty

This sardonic look at death and dying and the medical establishment by a Dutch M.D. who works in a nursing home is the best book I've read all summer. Very entertaining, funny, thought provoking and poignant. He talks about his feelings in helping terminally ill patients take their own lives. This doctor majored in philosophy as an undergraduate and ponders life's big questions in this slender volume.

Bert Keizer has written this wonderfully reflective book for those of us who may not have the privilege of spending time in intimate contact with people aware that they are near the end of their life. I found it thoroughly enjoyable and truly inspiring. If you have any interest in medicine, euthanasia, bioethics or what it is to be mortal I warmly recommend that you read it. Congratulations Dr. Keizer.

Dr. Bert Keizer really held my attention with this book he is an awesome writer and I really enjoyed

this book from the first page. He is ruggedly honest and fair to his patients, even kind and gentle when they are dying. I enjoyed the humor, the brutal honesty, and the intellectual integrity of this beautiful and insightful book. My only complaint is the translation from Dutch to English is less-than-perfect. It seems that the editor was in a hurry or not interested in the final outcome of this book. But overall it is very great reading!

This book is great and certainly not just for medical boffins. I almost felt guilty for being so entertained - almost. Quite literally couldn't put it down. What a great writer - I want him to do more and more and more please!

A truly intimate bedside companion to death and dying - each and all - one by one. What a great book. And how human we all are and how little the consolation of philosophy!

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