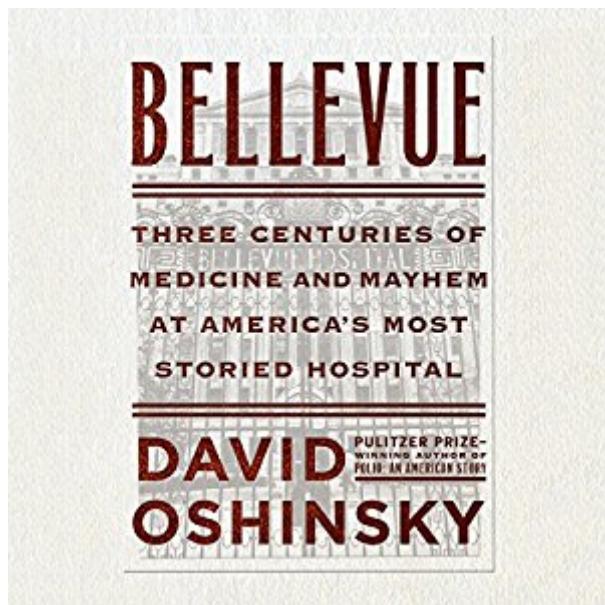


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Bellevue: Three Centuries Of Medicine And Mayhem At America's Most Storied Hospital



Synopsis

From a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian comes a riveting history of New York's iconic public hospital that charts the turbulent rise of American medicine. Bellevue Hospital, on New York City's East Side, occupies a colorful and horrifying place in the public imagination: a den of mangled crime victims, vicious psychopaths, assorted derelicts, lunatics, and exotic-disease sufferers. In its two and a half centuries of service, there was hardly an epidemic or social catastrophe - or groundbreaking scientific advance - that did not touch Bellevue. David Oshinsky, whose last book, *Polio: An American Story*, was awarded a Pulitzer Prize, chronicles the history of America's oldest hospital and in so doing also charts the rise of New York to the nation's preeminent city, the path of American medicine from butchery and quackery to a professional and scientific endeavor, and the growth of a civic institution. From its origins in 1738 as an almshouse and pesthouse, Bellevue today is a revered public hospital bringing first-class care to anyone in need. With its diverse, ailing, and unprotesting patient population, the hospital was a natural laboratory for the nation's first clinical research. It treated tens of thousands of Civil War soldiers, launched the first civilian ambulance corps and the first nursing school for women, pioneered medical photography and psychiatric treatment, and spurred New York City to establish the country's first official board of health. As medical technology advanced, "voluntary" hospitals began to seek out patients willing to pay for their care. For charity cases it was left to Bellevue to fill the void. The latter decades of the 20th century brought rampant crime, drug addiction, and homelessness to the nation's struggling cities - problems that called a public hospital's very survival into question. It took the AIDS crisis to cement Bellevue's enduring place as New York's ultimate safety net, the iconic hospital of last resort. Lively, pause-resisting, fascinating, Bellevue is essential American history.

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Customer Reviews

One of few books I didn't buy on , I wanted to write about it because it is such a great read. Tons of fascinating backstory here. Bellevue has a unique identity among hospitals and this book explains why. You will gain insight into the history of New York City, and effects of the various waves of immigration upon the growth of NC. Also, the author offers concise, riveting descriptions of the development of public health. An account of why Bellevue's devotion to indigent patients gave its staff the expertise to overcome its perpetual lack of funding. This book is a delight to read, and I will now turn to the author's earlier book, Polio.

My grandmother worked at Bellevue in the early 1900s and for a variety of reasons I have been back and forth for some seventy years. In the mid 50s it resembles a classic 19th Century insane asylum with poorly kept facilities. Today it is exemplary. It is one of the classic public hospitals and remains that way, serving a broad spectrum of patients. The book is wonderfully written in that it gives both a history of Bellevue as well as the development of the other hospitals in New York. Each had their historical beginnings in a religious group from Protestant to Catholic to Jewish. But it was Bellevue which managed to have its doors open to all. The author presents this up and down history in an exceptionally readable manner and places it in context with the other institutions in New York. This is definitely a worthwhile read for those interested in New York as well as the development of health care.

Oshinsky's writing is clear, cohesive and compassionate. I loved this book. My only connection to the subject matter was living in New York for 15 years (25 years ago) and never paying attention to the hospital. If you have any interest at all in the history of NYC, hospitals, medicine, social programs, government corruption, advancements in medical research, disease control or decades of devoted service, read this book. Get engrossed, get enlightened, get educated. You'll also get entertained.

I am going to give copies of this book to people I know who are in the medical field. I hope Bellview continues to have a very long life.

This was an incredible history of Bellevue hospital in New York. I've read Oshinsky's books and enjoyed them immensely before. His writing is spectacular, and his research is impeccable. The information from so much medical history was wonderful. The hospital dealt with so many crises in New York history, and actually in the history of the United States. I'm from the San Francisco Bay area, and I actually worked in a lab on HIV encephalitis during the 90's. Oshinsky's writing concerning what was seen at Bellevue in the early 1980's when patients came in with horrific opportunistic diseases, such as Karposi's sarcoma. Other hospitals would discriminate against these patients, just like society at large did, and they would die horrific deaths alone, except for the good doctors and nurses at Bellevue. Oshinsky makes it abundantly clear how much we need these public hospitals to serve those that private hospitals refuse to serve, who are too poor to afford insurance. I don't think that people who are wealthy understand...if we have outbreaks of epidemics in the poor and downtrodden, all the private hospitals, and good medications in the world won't prevent those epidemics from spreading throughout our cities. Only public hospitals at the forefronts of these epidemics can prevent them from spreading further. And if Medicaid is cut back, and the National Institutes of Health cannot provide grants to places such as Bellevue who do the research on these epidemics...everyone will pay for the lack of foresight. I would highly recommend this book to the people I teach who will become nurses and doctors. I would also recommend it for anyone interested in medical history. It's good to be reminded of our history, the successes and the failures...if we have any hope of doing better in the future.

This book walks the reader through 300 years of the life of a hospital. Extremely well written, the book chronicles the entire story of this great hospital.

Who would guess a book about a hospital could be so riveting? Its location being the incomparable New York City, you get a deep appreciation for one of the reasons this city is so great and its impact on the country at large. The best and most trying things about the city are the same: its people. Oshinsky weaves history and personal stories into one absorbing read.

This was a very interesting account of the history of medicine and how it evolved over the years. The only reason why I gave this book four stars instead of five is a feel the title is somewhat misleading. While some of this book involves details of the day-to-day activities at Bellevue, those who pick up this book looking for details of the goings-on at Bellevue and only at Bellevue, might be disappointed as there is a lot of focus on other organizations, diseases, New York City, etc., that

don't necessarily involve Bellevue. Some may also choose to read this book because the hospital is known for its mental healthcare, but this book does not have a large focus on this aspect. Nonetheless, this is a great read, especially for the lay person who does not have a background in medicine, but is interested in its history. Recommended.

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