

## Quoting quotes

**Medicine in quotations. Views of health and disease through the ages.** 2nd ed. Edward J Huth, T Jock Murray, editors. Philadelphia: American College of Physicians, 2006 (xvi + 581 pp, \$87.10). ISBN 1 930513 67 4.

**WHY, IN THESE TIMES** of rapid electronic access to information, do we need books that compile the wit and wisdom of the famous and not so famous? Could it be that these tomes conveniently satisfy an abiding human curiosity to know what was said about what, who said it and where? And doctors are no exception. Medicine is a treasure trove of quotations made by its practitioners from antiquity to modern times, and this rich tapestry is on display in *Medicine in quotations*.

Edited by EJ Huth, Emeritus Editor of the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, and TJ Murray, a past Chairman of the board of trustees of the publisher, the American College of Physicians, the book details more than 3500 quotations distilled from submissions by 106 contributors.

It presents the quotations under broad headings arranged in alphabetical order. The currency of the quotations is reflected by topics such as AIDS, Gulf

War syndrome, chronic fatigue syndrome, health policy and so on. The quotations are identified by their authors and source and are arranged in chronological order. Finding relevant quotes is a breeze using the book's comprehensive subject index. For the more curious, there is also a listing of the publication source of each quote.

It should not be surprising that the most frequent quotations are by Hippocrates and Sir William Osler. The only modern person with a substantive entry is biologist–author Lewis Thomas.

*Medicine in quotations*, despite its cost, will supersede its ageing competitor, *Familiar medical quotations* (published in 1968). The book should be an obligatory addition to medical libraries and be on the shelves of medical writers, editors, lecturers and after-dinner speakers. After all, to quote Dorothy Sayers, the British author and scholar: “I always have a quotation for everything — it saves original thinking”.

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