

ADVICE TO DOCTORS

More than 100 years ago, a “must read” book for doctors was the *Book on the Physician Himself and Things That Concern His Reputation and Success* by Daniel Webster Cathell, MD, of Baltimore.

First published in 1882, the book sold for \$2 and went through 12 revised editions between 1892 and 1931. Its popularity lay in its pragmatic advice on the public modus vivendi of doctors. The essence of the book has been outlined by social historian David Dary in his recent book *Frontier medicine** and is quoted below.

In 1890, when home visits were at the center of most medical practices, the doctor either walked or went by horse to see his patients. In the 1890 edition, Cathell wrote, “If you unfortunately have a bony horse and a seedy looking buggy, do not let them stand in front of your office for hours at a time, as if to advertise your poverty, lack of taste or paucity of practice.” ...

Dr Cathell added, “Clean hands, well-shaved face or neatly trimmed beard, unsoiled shirt and collar, unimpeachable hat, polished boots, spotless cuffs, well-fitting gloves, fashionable well made clothing of fine texture, cane, sun-umbrella, neat office jacket ... indicate gentility and self respect.”

In the last printing of the book ... Cathell wrote: “The majority of people will employ a well-dressed medical man with clean genteel appearance and manners, always neat but never gaudy. They will accord him more confidence, and willingly pay to him larger bills, even though he may have a homely figure and a baboon face.” ...

Cathell urged doctors to follow good business practices and ask to be paid in cash, not credit ... He also urged doctors to attend to their own personal health by not working to the point of exhaustion.

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose (the more things change, the more they stay the same) — Alphonse Karr (1808–1890).



Martin B Van Der Weyden

* Dary D. *Frontier medicine: from the Atlantic to the Pacific 1492–1941*. New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2009: 313.

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May MJA BookClub Winner

Congratulations to Dr Michelle Withers, NT, who wins a choice of 5 books from the extensive “Fast Facts” series. Thanks to everyone who purchased books from the May MJA BookClub. Pictured left is Graeme Prince, Assistant Editor/Scientific Proofreader, who drew May's winner.

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To see our new listings and find out about our great offer this month, see page 57 and the inside back cover of this issue.

