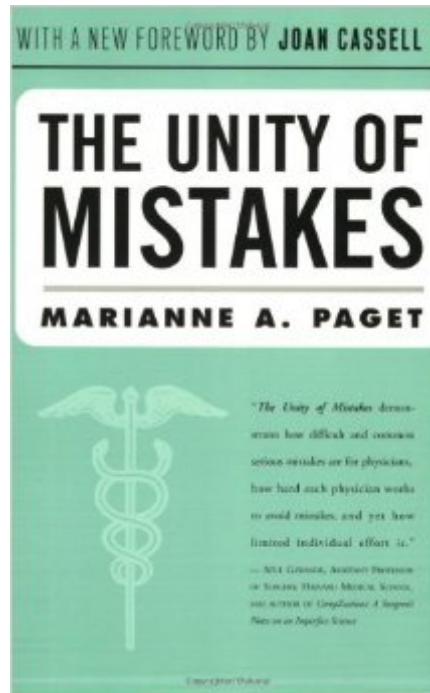


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Unity Of Mistakes: A Phenomenological Interpretation



Synopsis

Long considered a classic on the nature of medical mistakes, Marianne Paget's *The Unity of Mistakes* is now available to a new generation of readers. Paget - who herself died of a medical error - argued that mistakes are an intrinsic part of the clinical process. Encompassing a much wider range of error than the terms malpractice, incompetence, or negligence denote, *The Unity of Mistakes* takes an existential view of medical work in which things go wrong as a matter of course, and probes what Paget called the complex sorrow that can result when things do go wrong.

Book Information

Paperback: 200 pages

Publisher: Temple University Press; 1 edition (February 25, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1592131867

ISBN-13: 978-1592131860

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.5 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (2 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #3,517,411 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #97 in [Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Psychology & Counseling > Medicine & Psychology](#) #1954 in [Books > Medical Books > Administration & Medicine Economics > Health Policy](#) #10242 in [Books > Medical Books > Medicine > Reference](#)

Customer Reviews

Very interesting description of the process of medical diagnosis and intervention - the full truth of a medical condition is seldom knowable at the outset and reveals itself in the response to various procedures and interventions - but Paget says it much more eloquently, and quotes physicians reflecting on their processes. Particularly poignant as the author dies not too long after writing the book - as a result of a cancer not diagnosed early enough - but unknown to her at the time of the writing.

I give this book three stars for the conclusion that mistakes in clinical practice are inevitable.

Otherwise, I expected more from this monograph. The author discusses rather philosophical aspects of clinical mistakes, without attempting some sort of classification. Some examples given I personally would not consider a mistake, but rather an unfavorable statistical play. For instance, if

the clinical data and tests point to a diagnosis with high probability but at the end the diagnosis is wrong, this is not a mistake in its pure sense. In clinical practice you seldom make a choice between the risk and no risk, but rather between different risks, and this idea has been around for a long time. I expected this book to focus on actual mistakes, such as administering a wrong drug, operating on the wrong site or misinterpreting the clinical information, discussing systems and ways of preventing this and their limitations. Instead, there is a lot of musing on emotions and sorrow and excerpts from interviews with doctors. In short, this is not the book I would recommend as a study of mistakes in clinical practice.

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