



Patient Safety America Newsletter

March 2011

<http://PatientSafetyAmerica.com>

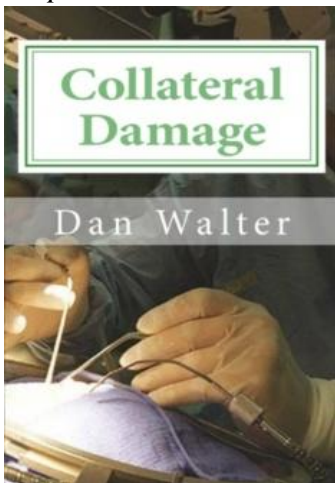
John T. James, Ph.D.

Book Review:

Collateral Damage: "Read it. It could save your life"

Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

This book joins others in the growing series of stories written by people who have watched a loved one suffer needlessly at the hands of the American healthcare industry. In this case, Dan Walter, a writer and political consultant, describes the dangerous treatment his wife received at a hospital regarded as one of the best *teaching hospitals* in the nation – Johns Hopkins Hospital.



Pam's story unfolds in packets of events as the reader is carried forward and backward through her experience, starting with a botched pacemaker placement (not at Johns Hopkins) that caused years of pain to the main event, a botched catheter ablation attempt at Hopkins.

Catheter ablation is a process by which lines are inserted through a large vein into the right chambers of the heart. There are various hot tips on these things and the goal is to burn offending electrical pathways inside the heart (or major vessels) that cause atrial fibrillation (rapid heart beat in the upper chamber of the heart). The probe is guided by the cardiologist using marginal images of the heart to where he supposes the destruction should take place. And then the tissue is killed with heat.

In Pam's case a quasi-experimental probe, which was used by an inexperienced operator who was supposedly being directed by a world class

Hopkins electrophysiologist, got entangled in muscle strands inside her heart. After several gentle attempts to remove the probe, a cardiologist decided to pull hard on the stuck probe. This shredded Pam's mitral valve and left her in a desperately ill condition. She is faced with two choices: death with no open-heart surgery, or risky emergency surgery to replace her shredded valve.

Pam's story is laced in with the stories of other victims of money-driven healthcare and ego driven physicians, along with pinches of humor and sarcasm. Sadly, it contains many of the elements that are hallmarks of the American medical industry: cherry-picking less-sick individuals for efficacy studies, desperate device manufacturers, two-faced promotion by doctors, off-label use of devices, callous and deceptive strategies to obtain „informed' consent from patients, obtuse recording of events to obscure egregious errors, lost evidence, and blaming the equipment instead of the physician using it. Finally, the wagons are circled by cardiologists to protect their famous colleague from accountability. The Hopkins lawyers do their job in the end and get any case against the doctors pitched out.

As the Walter's awful journey unfolds we are exposed to other known transgressions committed within this esteemed hospital: The death of Josie King, 18 months old, who died from dehydration and the death of Ellen Roche, 24 years old, from a dangerous inhalation experiment.

This book is an on-target indictment of dangerous, unethical, and money-driven factions within our healthcare industry. Many ill patients receive quality care in America, but far too many are also victims of the dark heart that poisons American healthcare. Read it. It could save your life. **5 stars.**
\$17.95 @ Amazon and \$7.98 @ Kindle