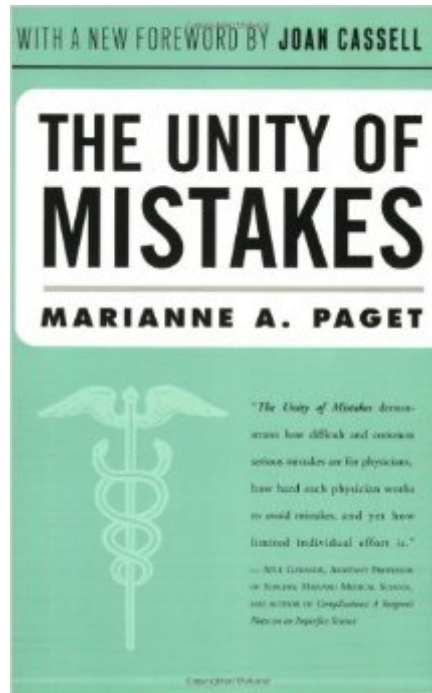


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Unity Of Mistakes: A Phenomenological Interpretation



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

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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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