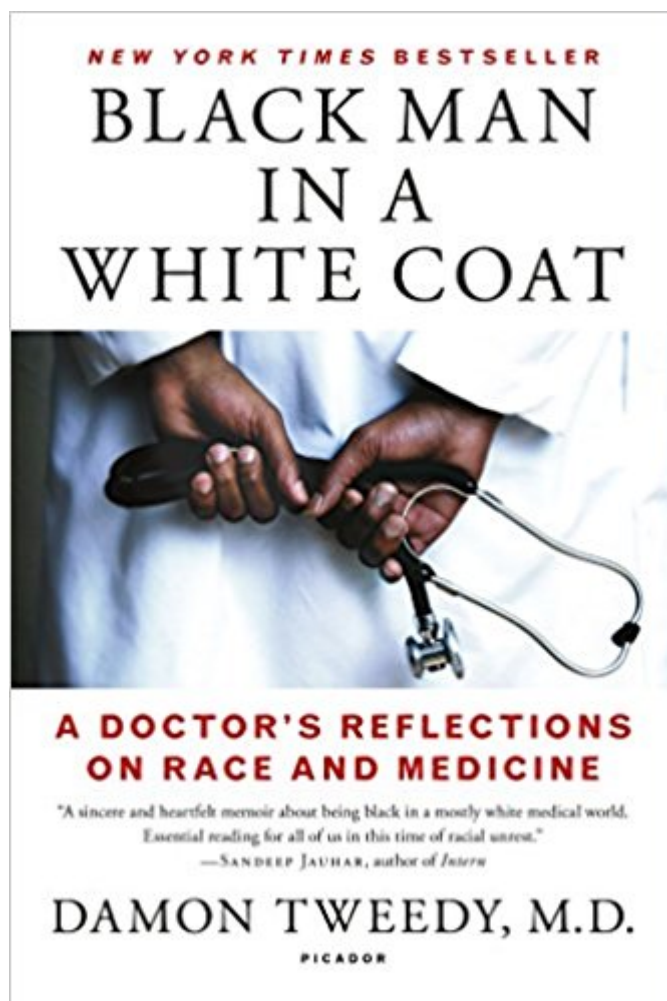


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# Black Man In A White Coat: A Doctor's Reflections On Race And Medicine



## Synopsis

A NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • ONE OF TIME MAGAZINE'S TOP TEN NONFICTION BOOKS OF THE YEAR A LIBRARY JOURNAL BEST BOOK SELECTION • A BOOKLIST EDITORS' CHOICE BOOK SELECTION

One doctor's passionate and profound memoir of his experience grappling with race, bias, and the unique health problems of black Americans

When Damon Tweedy begins medical school, he envisions a bright future where his segregated, working-class background will become largely irrelevant. Instead, he finds that he has joined a new world where race is front and center. The recipient of a scholarship designed to increase black student enrollment, Tweedy soon meets a professor who bluntly questions whether he belongs in medical school, a moment that crystallizes the challenges he will face throughout his career. Making matters worse, in lecture after lecture the common refrain for numerous diseases resounds, "More common in blacks than in whites."

**Black Man in a White Coat** examines the complex ways in which both black doctors and patients must navigate the difficult and often contradictory terrain of race and medicine. As Tweedy transforms from student to practicing physician, he discovers how often race influences his encounters with patients. Through their stories, he illustrates the complex social, cultural, and economic factors at the root of many health problems in the black community. These issues take on greater meaning when Tweedy is himself diagnosed with a chronic disease far more common among black people. In this powerful, moving, and deeply empathic book, Tweedy explores the challenges confronting black doctors, and the disproportionate health burdens faced by black patients, ultimately seeking a way forward to better treatment and more compassionate care.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Ã¢â“In this fascinating, heartbreaking memoir, Tweedy documents his experiences as an African American doctor in a medical system that can be ‘just as sick as its patients.’Ã¢â  
Ã¢âO, The Oprah MagazineÃ¢â“Tweedy reveals all you need to know about the Byzantine health care system, wide-ranging disparities that persist and, more important, how we can take control of our well-being...Black Man in a White Coat is certain to garner incredible attention during the literary awards season. It’s a book that deserves a very long shelf life.Ã¢â  
Ã¢âEssenceÃ¢â“In ways wholly individual but similarly intricate, Margo Jefferson, Dr. Damon Tweedy and Ta-Nehisi Coates examine the impact of race on our expectations and experiences. And in doing so, they challenge us to as well.Ã¢â  
Ã¢âTimeÃ¢â“Riveting.Ã¢â  
Ã¢âEntertainment Weekly, The Must ListÃ¢â“On one level the book is a straightforward memoir; on another itÃ¢â, as a thoughtful, painfully honest, multi-angled, constant self-interrogation about himself and about the health implications of being black.Ã¢â  
Ã¢âSarah Lyall, The New York TimesÃ¢â“[A] heartfelt account... Black Man in a White Coat is a commentary on challenges and lessons [Dr. Tweedy has] encountered as a physician of color, offering first-hand truths about the medical issues and racial divides in health care plaguing our community.Ã¢â  
Ã¢âEbonyÃ¢â“FascinatingÃ¢â| What sets this book in motion is TweedyÃ¢â, as dogged quest to understand how his personal experience relates to the staggering issue of health care inequality. In the process, he shines a light on disparities than can be hard to fathomÃ¢â|. An engaging, introspective memoir that will force readers to contemplate the uncomfortable reality that race impacts every aspect of life, even medicineÃ¢â|. A timely, thought-provoking examination of our heartbreaking health care system.Ã¢â  
Ã¢âUSA TodayÃ¢â“Black Man in a White Coat offers a clear, informative and uncommonly balanced assessment. Tweedy unflinchingly examines historical patterns of racial inequity in health care. But he also brings attention to often-overlooked indicators of progressÃ¢â|. Attentive to the frustrating inequalities rooted in our history, TweedyÃ¢â, as Black Man in a White Coat is also usefully attuned to the promising prospects ahead.Ã¢â  
Ã¢âRandall Kennedy, The Washington PostÃ¢â“While many doctors write booksÃ¢â the Greek physician Ctesias in antiquity, Atul Gawande todayÃ¢â few have concerned themselves with race. Black Man in a White Coat: A

Doctor's Reflections on Race and Medicine is Tweedy's thoughtful answer to that gap. Newsday "Tweedy's vulnerability makes him a vivid and engaging narrator. [Black Man in a White Coat] makes important contribution to the ongoing debate about health care in America. Tweedy has advanced a much-needed public conversation about racial disparities in medicine which, while less familiar to most Americans than the deaths that inspired the Black Lives Matter movement, continue to cost black lives. The Boston Globe "A powerful case on how, in the era of Obamacare and the nation's first black president, race can still determine who gets sick and lives, or dies. Minneapolis Star Tribune "A revealing, moving, and courageous examination of racism in American health care ... [Tweedy's] willingness to be self-critical as well as his reluctance to be overtly partisan gives Tweedy's book an evenhandedness that lends its conclusions added weight, even when he wades into partisan waters. The Daily Beast "Required reading for African-Americans and health care professionals. Raleigh News & Observer "Tweedy uses vivid anecdotes to ground his critiques of physician prejudice and health concerns that affect his community. It's this investment in the personal that makes Black Man in a White Coat especially powerful. Tweedy's perspective and his willingness to challenge his own fundamental biases puts a voice to a social epidemic that demands to be addressed. Maclean's "Black Man in a White Coat is a thoughtful memoir that explores the nexus of race and medicine through the eyes of a black physician. Los Angeles Review of Books "Tweedy, an African American psychiatrist at Duke University, expertly weaves together statistics, personal anecdotes, and patient stories to explain why 'being black can be bad for your health'... A smart, thought-provoking, frontline look at race and medicine. Booklist, starred review "An arresting memoir that personalizes the enduring racial divide in contemporary American medicine.... In this unsparingly honest chronicle, Tweedy cohesively illuminates the experiences of black doctors and black patients and reiterates the need for improved understanding of racial differences within global medical communities. Kirkus Reviews "Eye-opening... [Tweedy's] painful anecdotes, both as an intern and physician, show the critical health crisis within the black community.... [and] he nicely unravels the essential issues of race, prejudice, class, mortality, treatment, and American medicine without blinking or polite excuses. Publishers Weekly "A must-read for anyone interested in improving medical care from training to delivery in a world where race persists as a factor in life and death. Library Journal "[Tweedy] brings an interesting and valuable perspective on healthcare in this

country for all of those who are less privileged, without being preachy or political. It's a clear view from a man in a white coat.

— Carol Fitzgerald, BookReporter

“In this thought-provoking memoir, an African-American doctor discusses not only how being Black can be bad for your health, but also the complex cultural and physiological reasons why.”

— Refinery29, Fall

Most Highly Anticipated Nonfiction Reads

“I could not stop reading Damon Tweedy's *Black Man in a White Coat: A Doctor's Reflections on Race and Medicine*, an engrossing look at the modern medical profession from a unique and often unheard perspective.”

— Patrik Henry Bass of *Essence Magazine*

“A sincere and heartfelt memoir about being black in a mostly white medical world. Essential reading for all of us in this time of racial unrest.”

— Sandeep Jauhar, author of *Intern: A Doctor's Initiation* and *Doctored: The Disillusionment of an American Physician*

“An eye-opening and compelling examination of medicine's continued discomfort with race. Damon Tweedy is unafraid to dissect both the intriguing and disturbing elements of becoming a doctor. Required reading for anyone wishing to understand medicine in America today.”

— Danielle Ofri, MD, PhD, author of *What Doctors Feel: How Emotions Affect the Practice of Medicine*

“Damon Tweedy eloquently weaves the experiences of an African-American physician with those of African-American patients, carefully documenting how issues of race too often unspoken permeate American medicine in this timely and necessary book.”

— Barron H. Lerner, MD, PhD, author of *The Good Doctor: A Father, A Son and the Evolution of Medical Ethics*

“Everyone interested in Medical Education should read this book. Tweedy's writing is clear and compelling as he describes his experience as a black medical student and resident in a predominantly white southern university. This book inspires hope that racial prejudice is diminishing in medical education and patient care. It is an optimistic commentary on the future of American Medicine.”

— H. Keith H. Brodie, MD, President Emeritus Duke University

Damon Tweedy is a graduate of Duke Medical School and Yale Law School. He is an assistant professor of psychiatry at Duke University Medical Center and staff physician at the Durham VA Medical Center. He has published articles about race and medicine in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* and the *Annals of Internal Medicine*. His columns and op-eds have appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Raleigh News & Observer*, and the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. He lives outside Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina.

As the title suggests, this is a must read for anyone who is interested in how race and medicine intersect, from the development of young black talent to the unfortunate racial disparities in health care delivery and outcomes. The narrative is engaging and instructive without being preachy, overbearing, or simplistically pretending to have solutions to deeply rooted and complex problems. It is like having a good conversation with an old friend. I had the good fortune to walk the halls of Duke with Dr. Tweedy (when he was "Student-doctor" Tweedy) and can attest that very little poetic license has been taken in this work - the narratives are true and largely unmarred by time and emotional content. Perhaps this is what makes his stories so powerful and instructive, and relevant to people of many backgrounds. Dr. Tweedy's ability to turn disappointments and injustices into opportunities for personal growth and even policy making make for a compelling read as well. Readers from many backgrounds should find "Black Man In A White Coat" appealing, beneficial, and perhaps even transformative. If you have an interest in the etiologies and possible remedies of racial disparities in health outcomes, this book provides an excellent introduction to the scope of the problem in an engaging narrative form. If you are a practicing medical provider, this work can make you a better doctor - it provides an opportunity for self examination, encourages self-awareness of stereotypes we all carry around, and brings to the forefront the complex "perfect storm" of factors that lead to racial health disparities. And if you are an aspiring minority professional, the grit that Dr. Tweedy demonstrates throughout this work will serve as an inspiring example (much like those of Dr. Ben Carson and Dr. Keith Black) and to some extent a road map to navigating the slow to change racial landscape still encountered in the academic and professional world. One last piece of advice - although this book is written in an easy to read narrative form, make no mistake - it represents not only a life experience, but also is the product of many conversations and much scholarship. Take advantage of the copious "Notes" section following the main text, and consider using this book as an opportunity to explore primary source material referenced to further enrich your experience. Bravo Dr. Tweedy!

Black Man in a White Coat is Damon Tweedy's memoir of his experience as a black man getting into medical school up through becoming a practicing physician. At the very beginning of medical school, one of his professors mistook him for a maintenance worker even though he was dressed nicely and had been in his class for a month. Tweedy recounts his embarrassment, even though it was the professor who should have been embarrassed. He also talks about the mixed emotions he felt about a form of affirmative action being one of the reasons that he was admitted to Duke medical school. Once he starts interacting with patients, he has a

variety of experiences related to race that make him aware of the issues that both black doctors and black patients face. Some of them aren't too surprising (although still horrible), like the white patient who didn't want a black doctor. Some were very surprising to me. For instance, he encountered a black patient who didn't want a black doctor. Tweedy backs up his personal examples with research that shows whatever issues he encounters exist on a larger scale. They are not isolated incidents experienced only by him. Tweedy writes about medical information in an accessible manner with a conversational tone. My eyes were opened to race related issues in the medical field that I hadn't previously considered. This is a great memoir that I highly recommend.

I think *Black Man in a White Coat* is an important book for people to read even if, like me, they are white and not in the medical field. Our country is in the midst of so many serious racial issues the likes of which we haven't seen since the civil rights movement. I naively thought that we had come a long way and racial relations were fine now until the events of the past couple of years. But I have been paying closer attention and realize that things still have a long way to go before blacks and whites are truly on equal footing. Dr. Tweedy's book beautifully tells story after story of inequities in medical care in our country as well as difficulties he faced as a medical student and young doctor. The book is spellbinding and often reads like a novel so readers who might tend to shy away from nonfiction might want to give this a try. I think Dr. Tweedy has done a masterful job of telling his story of beating the odds and becoming a doctor. Along the way he discovered so many problems related to the way blacks are perceived by medical professionals.

Excellent book. I would recommend this book to every medical student. I am buying copies for my son and his three roommates who are Fourth year medical students. I have heard them discuss some of their encounters in medical school and at the hospitals. This is 2015 and we are still dealing with the racism of the 1950's. I see it daily on the evening news and it is destroying this nation. Thank you Dr. Tweedy for writing this truthful and revealing book. This book will provide some guidance for future medical students and residents.

I am still reading this, but I have found it to be eye-opening. I worked in medicine for 39 years as a Caucasian woman. This book shows another side of medicine I never acknowledged. I would recommend it to anyone in medicine or anyone who wants to see life from a different perspective. I will be reading it again.

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