Complications: A Surgeon’s Note on Imperfect Science

The book *Complications: A Surgeon’s Note on Imperfect Science* is quite an extraordinary masterpiece. It is broken down into three categories: Fallibility, Mystery, and Uncertainty, which each consist of individual essays themselves. These essays are a collection of experiences of Atul Gawande, after exiting residency. Even though it may seem as though such a topic, and such essays would be boring, Gawande decides on writing the most extreme cases, situations that would inevitably keep me reading and drawn to go back and get more. Such was evident in even the first case presented, someone being shot in the buttocks. In most medical books such a traumatic event probably wouldn’t even have cracked the core of the book, let alone the very first section. Yet this immediately sets the tone of the novel, one that would remain throughout; fun and enjoyable.

Throughout his fourteen essays, Gawande was able to shine a light on information that in most scenarios, patients wouldn’t be able to comprehend. But he doesn’t do it in a manner as if he were the doctor, but rather he does it from a different angle, a blend between the doctor’s view and the patient’s perspective. Such was the case when the child with a tumor was being operated on. The comments he left regarding the child were compassionate and kind, almost like a mother or father perspective, and definitely not usual for doctor’s.

Gawande keeps this steady tone throughout the novel by continually presenting events that would seem to be lost in the daily environment. This was the case in the woman losing her television news-casting job because of uncontrollable blushing. Or, the case of an architect with unexplainable back pain. Indeed these events are enough to keep one reading as they present a multitude of mini-climaxes, but Gawande hooks the reader by detailing what could go wrong in operations, or how there is no perfect individual. He explains how doctor’s lose their jobs because of one mistake, albeit a fatal one. These events, those experienced by the patients and the doctors, serve to create the very aura of an easy-going reading.

*Complications: A Surgeon’s Note on Imperfect Science* is quite compatible with the subject we have been covering throughout the year thus far. It itself has everything to do with biomedical engineering. Gawande’s presents the perspective that technology is ever-changing and doctor’s need to compensate for this, sometimes making erroneous judgments that end up causing them to lose their job. Yet new decisions are made everyday. New diseases are discovered as medicine and technology continually struggles to battle and overcome the diseases prevalent throughout the world.

On a different level, the book also discusses problems that patients face. It is somewhat like what we’ve been discussing, financial problem (the inability to afford operations), or the different paths one could choose (getting operations done). In conclusion, *Complications* is a book I would recommend to anyone, especially to those interested in the medical field. It is a book that presents serious non-fiction material in a light, easy to enjoy manner.