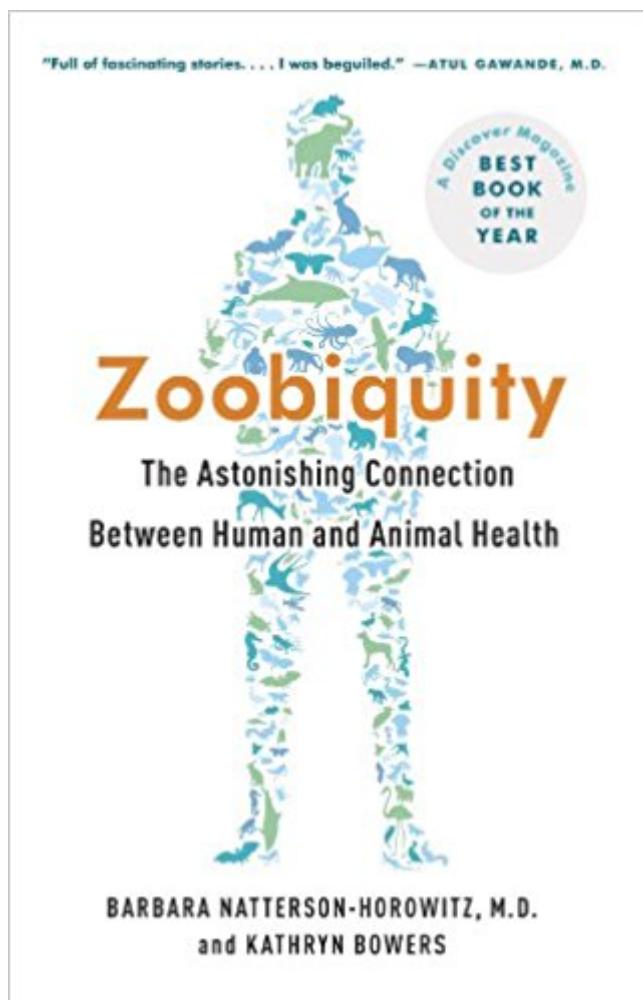


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Zoobiquity: What Animals Can Teach Us About Health And The Science Of Healing



Synopsis

In the spring of 2005, cardiologist Barbara Natterson-Horowitz was called to consult on an unusual patient: an Emperor tamarin at the Los Angeles Zoo. While examining the tiny monkey's sick heart, she learned that wild animals can die of a form of cardiac arrest brought on by extreme emotional stress. It was a syndrome identical to a human condition but one that veterinarians called by a different name and treated in innovative ways. This remarkable medical parallel launched Natterson-Horowitz on a journey of discovery that reshaped her entire approach to medicine. She began to search for other connections between the human and animal worlds: Do animals get breast cancer, anxiety-induced fainting spells, sexually transmitted diseases? Do they suffer from obsessive-compulsive disorder, bulimia, addiction? The answers were astonishing. Dinosaurs suffered from brain cancer. Koalas catch chlamydia. Reindeer seek narcotic escape in hallucinogenic mushrooms. Stallions self-mutilate. Gorillas experience clinical depression. Joining forces with science journalist Kathryn Bowers, Natterson-Horowitz employs fascinating case studies and meticulous scholarship to present a revelatory understanding of what animals can teach us about the human body and mind. "Zoobiquity" is the term the authors have coined to refer to a new, species-spanning approach to health. Delving into evolution, anthropology, sociology, biology, veterinary science, and zoology, they break down the walls between disciplines, redefining the boundaries of medicine. Zoobiquity explores how animal and human commonality can be used to diagnose, treat, and heal patients of all species. Both authoritative and accessible, offering cutting-edge research through captivating narratives, this provocative book encourages us to see our essential connection to all living beings.

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I wrote once 'Sick? Go to a Vet' because veterinarians take a holistic approach, don't get bogged in dialogue with patients but attend to symptoms, care less for fancy disease names and more for practical cures, and, after all, physicians are limited in treating only one species of animals. In 2007 in East Lansing, MI, at my alma mater MSU, the respective presidents of the American Medical Association (AMA) and American Veterinary Association (AVMA) met and laid out a campaign to raise physician & public awareness of the very thin line between human and animal medicine. It didn't reach much further than the city limits. It's a fact that veterinarians as part of continuing education study human cases but the opposite is rarely true. Today I read an exciting exception in Discover Magazine's 'Book of the Year' Zoobiquity: The Astonishing Connection Between Human and Animal Health by Barbara Natterson-Horowitz. The author is a cardiologist and psychiatrist who moonlights at zoos. She noted over the years the similarities among species including us two-legged ones and has collected oddball case histories. Some are a bit detailed for the layman since, after all, it's written by a physician, however the strange parallels are worth the read. The second chapter on 'Feint of Heart' draws on about robins and generals fainting in the heat of battle, the third chapter is 'Jews, Jaguars & Jurassic Park', and in the fourth 'Roar-gasm' we learn that stallions at stud farms are allowed three stands to get the job done and then they're kicked out, just like the johns facing alarm clocks on Times Square. Ensuing chapters on 'Fat Planet' and so on offer hundreds if not a thousand examples of how human and animal health relate. We all get diseases, and for most of the 'civilization diseases' that comprise 80% of a physician's practice the author intimates that it's indeed better to go see a vet. I give this book four 'stars' to a physician and fine author for the courage to rear on her hind legs and point out to colleges and readers the benefits of studying animal medicine to cure ourselves. One drawback is the book follows what I call the 90-10 rule which so many genius-crackpot offer that 90% of the evidence cases presented are

false comparisons while the other 10% are astonishingly refreshing insights. It's up to the reader to distinguish which is which.

This book deserves many more than 5 stars. It is unquestionably one of the most fascinating books I've ever read. Further, it has changed my outlook and worldview in several areas, and reinforced some ideas I've been incubating for some time. Even as an RN of 30 years' experience, I found new learning on every page. You should know that it doesn't take a science background, however, because of the clarity of her writing. Dr. Natterson-Horowitz covers so many areas boldly and unabashedly, including sex and STDs, heart disease and obesity. To review this book chapter by chapter would be to ruin all the fun, though. The overwhelming message(s) are that we are more like animals than we realize (and vice versa), and that this connection cries out for substantial increases in research about the animal-human connection. Just to learn that anorexia nervosa is found in the animal kingdom, as is obesity and heart disease, tells us we've been needlessly missing the mark in research. Well, I could go on and on, but you need to get a copy of this book and read it. Your worldview, your understanding of our world, of animals and each other will be inevitably changed. That is a growth devoutly to be desired.

I just finished reading my copy of *Zoobiquity*. It is a ground-breaking book and essential reading for anyone interested in the connections between human and animal medicine. Readers familiar with "One Health" concepts will find in the book vivid examples of the convergence of human, animal, and environmental health in emerging infectious diseases and animals as sentinels of toxic and infectious hazards in the environment. Yet, it is worth focusing on some of the truly innovative aspects of this book. First, *Zoobiquity* boldly asserts that by neglecting its comparative medicine roots, clinical medicine itself has gone astray and the medical profession needs to use the perspective of clinical science that spans different species to get back on track. We need to understand mental health problems such as addiction and self-destructive behaviors in the context of evolution and environment, just as naturalists and veterinarians strive to do, and use this perspective to design new treatment and prevention approaches. Similarly, we need to use the same tools of evolutionary and environmental understanding to rethink our approaches to chronic diseases such as obesity and cancer. Second, *Zoobiquity* builds the strongest case to date for greater development of clinical knowledge of animal health using techniques that are driving evidence based medicine such as randomized trials and large observational cohorts followed over time in order to glean important information useful for both animal and human health. Third, the

concepts in Zoobiquity are presented so clearly and documented so extensively that they appear to have struck a chord in both the general population and the medical community that propels the discussion of human animal medicine linkages to a whole new level. Overall, Zoobiquity throws a gauntlet out to the biomedical scientific and clinical community, urging it not to delay further, but instead to set up an effective research and development infrastructure to pilot and test new hypotheses and clinical approaches using this enhanced comparative model. It will be fascinating to see who comes forward to accept this challenge.

Each chapter could have been summarized in a paragraph or two. A little too wordy and repetitive. The message is interesting.

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