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**WebMD**

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WebMD blog



*Dr. Ira Kirschenbaum shares information and advice about osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, joint replacement and more -- from symptoms and prevention of arthritis and other promising treatments.*

## WebMD Health News

### Read This Before You Get Put to Sleep :)



#### A Book Review: *An Unspoken Part of Surgery*

I was presented with an advance copy of a book I do not think I would purchase as a patient. It was also a book that had information I absolutely needed - as a patient. That's a tough situation. I need all this information but the book has too much information.

Panchali Dhar, MD is a well-respected anesthesiologist at New York Hospital, one of the premier medical institutions in this country. She has written a book entitled: "Before the Scalpel: What everyone should know about anesthesia." It is not really what everyone should know – it sort of is what everyone could know if they read this superbly written book.

The book is beautifully written, in a simple yet elegant style presenting extremely difficult concepts in an easy to understand format. There is not a nurse, medical student, surgical resident, or medical lawyer who should not pick up a copy of this book. Medical and nursing students get little to no formal training in anesthesiology although an anesthesiologist is present at nearly every operation that occurs in this country. This book has the information even they can use.

Dr. Dhar details everything from the machinery in the operating room, to explaining that many types of anesthesia, to complications, and more. It is nearly two hundred pages long and every sentence, every concept is crisp and concise and valuable to anyone who plans an operating room experience.

So you are John or Jane Q. Public. What in it for you? While the information is all there it is probably too much information for the average patient. The focus of a patient is on the specifics of their own [anesthesia](#) and surgery and not a treatise on the whole field. You would need to be extraordinarily interested in medicine as a lay person to read this cover to cover. Don't get me wrong, if you did read the book it would lower your pre-surgical anxiety but it may not go further than that.

There is a place for this with patients, though. All surgeons should make this book available to their patients to read and then return it to the surgeon after the surgery to go to the next patient. Too often patients get to the operating room and meet the anesthesiologist minutes before the procedure. Dr. Dhar's book won't prevent that but is a great starting point for a patient to learn more about this critical part of the surgical team.

I recommended to the author that she produce a mini-pocket book for patients that condenses the power of this book in a patient focused format. It would be a great compendium to this text.

Dr. Dhar should be commended for this excellent contribution to the medical literature for professionals and the public.

Dr. K.

Disclaimer: I never met Dr. Dhar, nor have I ever spoken to her. My sister, who is a master Pilates instructor in New York City happens to teach and train Dr. Dhar in Pilates and told Dr. Dhar that I am a surgeon. She was kind enough to send me an advance copy of the book. I am not involved financially in this book in any way. Too bad, though. It think it will be a good seller.

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