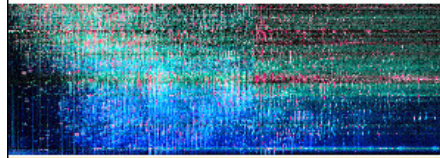


THE END *of* ILLNESS



David B. Agus, M.D.

The End of Illness

David B. Agus

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The End of Illness

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The End of Illness David B. Agus

Can we live robustly until our last breath?

Do we have to suffer from debilitating conditions and sickness? Is it possible to add more vibrant years to our lives? In the #1 *New York Times* bestselling *The End of Illness*, Dr. David Agus tackles these fundamental questions and dismantles misperceptions about what “health” really means. Presenting an eye-opening picture of the human body and all the ways it works—and fails—Dr. Agus shows us how a new perspective on our individual health will allow us to achieve a long, vigorous life.

Offering insights and access to powerful new technologies that promise to transform medicine, Dr. Agus emphasizes his belief that there is no “right” answer, no master guide that is “one size fits all.” Each one of us must get to know our bodies in uniquely personal ways, and he shows us exactly how to do that. A bold call for all of us to become our own personal health advocates, *The End of Illness* is a moving departure from orthodox thinking.

The End of Illness Details

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Author : David B. Agus

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From Reader Review The End of Illness for online ebook

Sven says

In THE END OF ILLNESS, David B. Agus gives us concrete tasks to maintain and/or improve our overall health. He's a big supporter of preventive medicine, which is the exact opposite of the way our diagnostic medicine works nowadays: after the fact, when you are already sick.

From your family's illness tree and genetic testing, to the food you consume every day, your fitness routine and your drug intake, he's giving precise practical advice that you can choose to follow if you want. On the other hand, he's giving a forecast of the future developments in his field. The new medical technologies that are emerging right now promise a lot of hope in the fight against cancer and other illnesses.

What's absolutely revolutionary about this book is the central metaphor he describes: When penicillin was discovered in the 20th century, it enabled us to basically beat most bacterial infections that before could have been fatal. Unfortunately, the image of illness as an infection has since taken over in our collective minds and the fact that cancer or heart diseases are not infections but rather internal problems makes them harder for us to treat.

I'm glad I read this book. Definitely recommended.

Yitka says

Boy, do I have some strong opinions on this book.

What a disappointing read! With a title like this and an introduction that promises to turn everything you've ever read/known/heard about health upside down, I was expecting to be blown away by new, potentially controversial information about what causes illness. I found very little of the sort. I'll start with the good, though: Agus sets forth a few intriguing frontiers of modern medicine that I wasn't aware of--for example, he does a good job outlining the field of proteomics, the study of proteins, which are dynamic and constantly changing, unlike DNA, which is static. Certainly, the possibilities contained in the future of this field are exciting ones, and Agus' passion for and faith in the future of drug therapies, proteomics and genetics is palpable throughout the book. On pg. 259, he writes, "The marriage of technology and medicine will be one of history's most fruitful unions."

I respect his message of empowering individuals to be more proactive in their own healthcare, to work more collaboratively with their physicians, to become educated and stay skeptical of the many conflicting studies and inflammatory headlines surrounding what's supposedly good or bad for our health. He does a good job pointing out how skewed and inconclusive these studies often are, and how the media can quickly twist a poorly designed study or experiment into "facts" about what's healthy.

However, after alerting his readers to the danger of falling prey to this sort of information, Agus spends most of the book spouting out his own versions of it. He discusses the difference between causation and correlation, then repeatedly cites studies or hypotheses that may well be purely correlative, but encourages the reader to then accept his ideas as truth. He uses growing BMI rates as a sign of how unhealthy our society is becoming; I wouldn't disagree that our society is becoming unhealthier overall, but I think BMI is

a poor barometer with which to measure it. Because muscle weighs more than fat, and BMI does not take body composition (fat vs. muscle) into consideration, it's one of the poorest measurements of "health" ... and that's assuming that being overweight CAUSES disease, rather than just being CORRELATED to it.

He makes several rather radical claims throughout the book--exercising for more than an hour per day is detrimental to your health; everyone over the age of 40 should be on statins (e.g. cholesterol-lowering drugs like Lipitor or Crestor)--without including any actual information or studies to prove, let alone even support, this information. He spends the majority of the book discussing how different doctors and research scientists have arrived at polar opposite conclusions on similar subjects (e.g. is Vitamin E supplementation a good idea?) and every other paragraph concludes with, "This is too complex for us to really understand ..." yet he heralds technology and further studies/experimentation as the solution to everything. I found this a little confusing, given how many examples he provides of the billions of dollars being thrown into studies/experimentation that have done nothing so far but yield conflicting results (often made murky by profitable interests).

He encourages everyone to kneel at the almighty altar of genetics testing, while admitting he founded a genetics testing company. Good on him for the transparency, but it certainly didn't foster my 100% trust in the benevolence of his recommendations. I will admit that I approached his book with a bias against genetic testing, but was willing to listen to "the other side" and be convinced of its merits; I consider myself an open-minded person who appreciates a good debate that challenges my understanding of the world; I have allowed my mind to be changed by many arguments made for cases I originally did not agree with, or understand. However, the most compelling argument he seemed to muster for genetic testing (at least, at this point in time) is, "If you knew that your personal risk for having a heart attack in your life was 90 percent, you'd probably do everything you could to treat your heart well." True ... but I don't need a genetics test to tell me to treat my body the best I possibly can; I'm already motivated to do that, because I feel better in my day-to-day life when I treat my body well.

On page 79, he quotes the statistic that 73% of breast cancer is genetic, 27% is environmental. Where does he come up with this number, which contradicts every other study or estimate I've ever read on the subject? He credits his source as Navigenics, his own genetics testing company. Hmm ... then he writes that obesity is 67% genetic and 33% environment. Again, where do these numbers come from? Especially in a case like obesity which IS so clearly related to diet, does that 67% genetic stat take into account that our eating habits (environmental) are most heavily influenced by the families we were raised in? Seems to be this would be a very difficult statistic to put a number on, given the causation/correlation and nature/nurture debates, yet Agus presents these percentages in a pie-chart form he expects his readers to take at face value.

He criticizes vitamin supplementation because it's deriving nutrients from artificial sources, then says one of the major reasons that we don't need to supplement with vitamin D, for example, is because most milk, juices and cereals are already fortified with it. As far as I know (correct me if I'm wrong), vitamin D does not occur "naturally" in milk, juices or cereals; vitamin fortification in processed foods is just as artificial as taking a pill. Although I'm not really a proponent of vitamin supplements, his reasoning against them didn't quite ring true for me.

On page 185-187, he criticizes blending and juicing fruits, because he says that doing so creates oxidation and causes foods to "degrade into chemicals we don't yet understand the effects of." I was curious how blending a fruit would chemically transform it any differently than chopping it up with a knife on a cutting board, or chewing it thoroughly in our mouths before swallowing it, which no doubt would also "create oxidation" ... but Agus did not address this. Instead, he concludes the section with, "I hope you're not in a semi-panic and thinking about what this means for other kitchen staples such as food processors, blenders ...

Remember what I said in this beginning of this book: a lot of of my musings are merely exercises in thought." I'm sorry, but what a ridiculous cop-out for a doctor to make in a book that spends so much energy encouraging readers to be more discerning when they read that something is inherently good or bad for their health! Yet, at the end of the chapter, he includes the following "Health Rule: Don't trust anything that comes out of a blender, juicer or glass jar." What kind of a rule is that, if it's based on nothing more than his own personal, untested "exercise in thought"?

Personally, much of what Agus wrote just didn't resonate with me, especially when he makes sweeping claims about all of humanity. He writes, "We fail to eat well most of the time unless the fear of ill health and the desire to lose weight are great enough to make us choose quinoa over country-fried steak." Hmm. I don't appreciate being told that my food choices are either fear-based or vanity-based; perhaps I simply like the taste of quinoa better than country-fried steak. Perhaps I like the energy I feel after eating a plant-based meal more than I do the lethargy I feel after eating greasy animal products. He doesn't seem to take this into account, and just assumes that the only thing that will incentivize everyday people to make healthy decisions is the fear that a genetic predisposition to a particular disease might inflict.

I don't doubt the sincerity of Agus and his mission to reduce disease rates in our nation. But I felt that this book read primarily like a rambling textbook advertisement for his genetics company than the revolutionary read its title seemed to promise.

rezedorada says

Knjiga koja je maksimalno isforsirana i predstavljena više kao promotivni materijal za kompaniju ?iji je vlasnik sam autor. Meni je toliko bilo teško ?itati je, pola stvari je kontradiktorno i to sa previše NEPOTREBNIH informacija. Ništa novo nisam nau?ila niti promenila neke navike.

Keith Swenson says

I give five stars to books that are not only excellent, but ones that I feel that everyone should read. It is important.

In a world filled with books attempting to explain simple cause/effect relationships, Agus has the sanity to argue against reductionism -- that the human body is complex, and we should carefully assess all advice against your own experience. Everyone's body is unique, and what works for one will often not work for another. Far from dropping you into a sea of endless possibilities, Agus provides a life boat of rationality and common sense to help you chart your own course.

His assessment of the American medical establishment along with our obesity crisis is direct and lucid. It is not healthcare, it is "sick care". Throughout the book: a small price for taking care of your health will pay back many-fold by preventing expensive and inconvenient illness. To change this you, dear reader, must take control of your own health: eat real food, exercise regularly, avoid vitamins and supplements, avoid sources of inflammation, prepare for meetings with your doctor, etc.

Quite a bit is said about how ridiculous it is to take a single measurement, such as amount of LDL-cholesterol, and consider a drug to be effective only on that one measurement. Your body is a complex

system, and everything effects everything. It is a waste of time to look for "magic bullets" in medicine that address particular symptoms. We need a **NEW MODEL**.

"Inflammation is a telltale sign that something isn't right in your body." While inflammation is the body's mechanism for healing, it is also by itself harmful, and should be avoided. There are some inexpensive things that can be done with amazing results: one baby aspirin a day (for 5 years or more) can reduce your chance of dying from cancer from 10 to 60%! He also says everyone over 40 should be taking statins.

Love this quote: *"It is important to approach your health in general from a place of lack of understanding. Honor the body and its relationship to disease as a complex emergent system that you may never fully comprehend."*

Most of his advice is well within the reach of normal people: get plenty of sleep (and surprising studies that show the health benefit of this) Move and exercise regularly. Keeping a regular schedule allows your body to maintain homeostatis which keeps you healthier. Eat simple and fresh foods (and how frozen is sometimes healthier than 'fresh' food that has been sitting in the store for days).

He also has some thoughts about where medicine is (and should be) going. More individualized measurements (like the Quantified Self movement). He is a big believer in the emerging field of Proteomics which he feels might be able to give us a better picture of how the system of the body is performing, and if done regularly over time could give you a dynamic indication of problems before you notice other symptoms. It is not here today, but something I certainly am going to watch in the coming years.

Most of all, I like his practical, pragmatic advice: *"Be wary of headlines that tell you what is good or bad for you. Scrutinize data before you accept it as dogma."* He does not claim that there are simple answers, but instead encourages everyone to take an active role in figuring what is right for you. There are tools that can help, it is time to start using them.

Like I said: everyone should read this book.

Ann says

What an annoying book! Agus is a cancer doctor and named his book "The End of Illness," so I had great hopes for it. But he admitted that he couldn't really cure cancer or end illness. Even worse, he wrote a book that read like a textbook, rambled like a boring old professor and offered the same advice we all heard from our mothers. Obviously, we all feel better when we get enough sleep, eat a balanced diet and get regular exercise. But, he actually said that high heels can lead to the kind of inflammation that causes serious illness. He is also a big advocate for genetic testing, but of course he owns the company.

Kaiser is big on prevention and has done a great job of making sure I get all my vaccinations and tests on schedule, another one of his recommendations. He advocates statins and baby aspirin for everyone, but spends several pages denigrating vitamins. I just found this book annoying, but I think it would be a real insult to anyone who has a serious illness through no fault of their own.

Anna L Conti says

Too many words for too little info. But the basic advice he offered was sound: #1 Question everything, especially health news that appears in the general media, including online. #2 Vitamin supplements are probably a waste of money for most people and might be harmful for some people. #3 Michael Pollan got it right about food - follow his advice. #4 Wear comfortable shoes. #5 Exercise daily and avoid sitting for prolonged periods. #6 Maintain a regular schedule for meals, sleep, exercise. #7 be an informed consumer and take charge of your health (don't leave it all in the hands of your doctor.) #8 Chronic Inflammation is the big enemy, that might be at the root of Heart Disease, Cancer, Dementia, and many autoimmune diseases. He recommends taking statins as a preventative measure and he pushes them so relentlessly (without mentioning any of the side effects of statins) throughout the book that I started to wonder if he had stock in one of the companies that produces statins. It was the one odd note in this otherwise reasonably good of health advice.

Jerry says

I found a few interesting things in this book. There are some chapters that cover new developments in medicine such as personalized medicine, genomics, proteomics, effectiveness of supplements, microbiome enterotypes and cancer.

Then there are some practical guidelines that you could act on. "Keep a strict, predictable schedule 365 days a year that has you eating, sleeping, and exercising at about the same times day in and day out. Avoid napping unless you nap every day at the same time." People usually need 7 to nine hours of sleep, but regularity of time and deep sleep is more important than the total time. Even when you have a late night, get up at the same time as usual. Set aside at least 30 minutes before bedtime to unwind; avoid chores, work, computer, TV during this time. Avoid random snacking. Cut back on caffeine after 2pm. Avoid alcohol within hours of bedtime. If you can't eat at your regular time, have a healthful snack at the usual time. Eat cold water fish a minimum of 3 times a week (e.g. salmon, sardines, tuna, rainbow trout, anchovies, herring, halibut, cod, black cod, mahimahi, etc.) Choose a multicolored diet. Buy fresh vegetables that are really fresh, otherwise buy frozen. Drink red wine (one glass a night) five nights a week, unless at high risk of breast cancer. Reduce inflammation by wearing comfortable shoes, and getting an annual flu shot. If over 40 take statins, and a baby aspirin.

Sitting is as bad for you as smoking. Get up and move as much as possible. Get your heart rate up 50% for at least 15 minutes each day. Find an exercise you like to do. Exercise at the same times each day. Don't exercise more than an hour at a time. Interval exercise spread over the day is better than one session. "Ideally, a well-rounded and comprehensive exercise program includes cardio work, strength training, and stretching."

Allison says

Loved this book. First heard about it on the daily show, and the author cited two of my other all-time favorite authors: leavitt/dubner and michael pollan. Those 3 endorsements and I was sold. It was also good to read a book like this since it was recently published, and the studies were current. I thought Agus had a unique and convincing perspective as an experienced oncologist and his challenge of popular medical myths (juicing,

multivitamins, timing of meals/sleep, etc.) was really somewhat freeing. You can't read this book and put him into a self-help-author-stereotype like anti-medical establishment (he advocates baby aspirin and statins almost across the board for inflammation, and discusses genomic testing for disease, and free sharing of unidentifiable health information) but also is considerably holistic(encourages eating whole foods, exercise and eating/sleeping on a strict routine.) I like his advice and think it would be good for the average american, I hope that a modicum of this philosophy can seep into primary care providers' models as well. My husband is considering filling out the detailed health questionnaire on agus' website and taking it to his PCP (aka the flight surgeon) and watching his eyes glaze over...

Liaken says

Hm. Well, the paragraphs are very long and wordy, the examples are meandering and often not applicable, and he has a very hard time getting to the point. I don't know how many times he would say things like, "So, at this point, you're probably wondering what I would recommend," and then he would just blather on instead of saying what he recommended. So, basically, the writing is bad. In fact, the whole visual layout of the book makes it very clear that he is not trying to communicate a new paradigm of understanding. Instead, he's just listening to himself talk.

Does he offer anything new and amazing? Does he offer an End of Illness? Not really. He recommends routine, daily movement/exercise, whole foods, reducing inflammation (he's a big believer in flu shots and baby aspirin), paying attention to your body as a whole system instead of pieces ... things like that. Oh, and to spend a ton of money to get genetic testing (he is a part owner of a genetic testing company). So, no, nothing very new or practical. Alas.

For an excellent review that goes into more depth, see [this review](#).

Mike Smith says

I'm not sure what to make of this book. The author, David Agus, who is unquestionably qualified in his field of oncology, argues somewhat persuasively for a new approach to health care. Rather than the current method of "diagnose and treat," he suggests we need to be more proactive, taking regular measurements of our personal health parameters and taking action to correct any deviations as soon as they are noticed, even if we exhibit no obvious symptoms of illness yet. He supports what I've read elsewhere, which is that we all respond to drugs differently because of our unique genetic profiles. But then he says that our _protein_ profiles are more important than our genetic ones. Our genes tells us about what tendencies we might have for various illnesses, but only our past and current protein profile (which changes all the time) can tell us what's going on inside our bodies right now. Few companies currently offer protein profiling, but Dr. Agus is the founder of one such company. This comes across as self-serving.

The narrative is a bit disjointed and wanders from topic to topic with sometimes abrupt transitions. There seems to be some contradictory advice as well. For example, he advises us not to take vitamins and other supplements unless a doctor has prescribed them because we can get all we need from a balanced diet. But then he says most food loses its nutritional value unless it's eaten within a day or two of being harvested. For most of us, shopping every day or two for fresh food is pretty much impossible, so maybe supplements aren't such a bad thing...?

The style verges from almost folksy to very technical and academic, yet there are gaps in the technical material. He spends quite a bit of time discussing the dangers of inflammation, for example, without ever really explaining what inflammation is. I was also somewhat put off to find that all the blurbs and endorsements for this book come from investors and entrepreneurs. Why are no medical experts praising these ideas? On the surface, they seem reasonable, but I'm just not sure.

All in all, there's some interesting food for thought here, but I'd like to see some corroboration from other experts.

Kara says

Absolutely the worst medical book I've read. Agus's suggestions include starting statins at 40, get genetically screened, avoiding wear heels, and reading Michael Pollan's book (the only thing I agreed with, and he must have mentioned it 10 times). Oh, yeah, Agus happens to be the owner of a genetic screening company. And he never mentions that statins happen to have a whole host of side effects, some of which are not inconsequential -- liver damage, type 2 diabetes. But who cares about credibility, when an author can just shamelessly namedrop instead? (See this Boston Globe article about how meaningless knowing your genome is anyway: <http://bo.st/M4y89N>.)

Unreliable narrator aside, this book was horribly edited. Agus rambles in endless circles, contradicts himself repeatedly, and is, overall, quite patronizing in his tone. Glad I can see through him! "The End of Illness" can't even compare to similar books in this genre (e.g., Groopman). Ugh!

Jay Connor says

Here is one of those rare books that confirm your intuition while upsetting 50+ years of conventional wisdom. What is most daunting is that the naked Emperor revealed here is the medical/pharma/insurance complex. This apparently wayward field is consuming ever-increasing portions of our GDP while delivering diminishing outcomes. We've all heard of the disparities between US per capita spending on health and healthy outcomes compared to most of the rest of the developed world. In "End of Illness," we see that this gap will never be closed if we continue to think about health the way we have been.

As with so many of our underachieving human endeavors of the past half-century, David Agus describes a problem of equal parts frame and fragmentation. In essence Agus is calling for us to look at the body as a system – at our health, systematically. Think of it as a delicate interwoven symphony of choice and genetics. Seems logical and appropriate. Right? Except when you consider that every way we approach thinking about the body is fragmented and silo-ed. There are thousands of specialists, who study one element of the whole: walled off from the unintended consequences of their good intentions. Research – especially the pharmaceutical pursuit of the next \$1Billion drug – is all targeted on the element and not the whole. Even the way we keep medical data precludes us seeing beyond the specific. This is the same problem that I have seen for decades in how we conceive achieving results in our communities or our schools.

The frame needs to shift from combating disease to ending illness (perfecting health). The dilemma is that all of the rewards (money) have been set to the multiple interventions, mostly after something bad occurs: operations, drugs, even vitamin and food supplements. As in most western paradoxes, in order to understand

why we work the way we do, in the face of suboptimal or non-existent results, follow the money. Sickness has many more investors than health.

Though Agus' recommendations are important, I think the larger value of the "End of Illness" is that it requires us to marvel at our flexible, self-correcting, human body and how it has been almost able to adapt to the harsh, alien environment of today's medical model.

Kathy says

Dr. Agus is an oncologist, but this book is not a treatise on cancer, and does not come close to Mukherjee's book "The Emperor of all Maladies". But Agus makes some fascinating claims that challenge my thoughts about things. He is slightly contradicting, for instance, he discourages the use of multivitamins and denounces the concept of "antioxidants" that is so prevalent today. He claims that everything we pop in our mouths, including multivitamins, can have a profound effect on our bodies, and should not be used indiscriminately. Then, he turns around and recommends statin drugs for everyone over the age of 40. Really????? He gives a fascinating in-depth discussion on how the genome mapping of the body is just the tip of the iceberg, and describes that proteomics, or protein-mapping within the genes, tell more of the story of what is happening in our bodies. By the way, he owns a company that will map your proteins for you, for a fee. How convenient. This book was handed to me by one of my "smoker" friends, who loved Agus's claim that being sedentary (like sitting on your butt and reading all day....oops) is just as hazardous to your health as smoking.. Now that is one pill that is a little too big to swallow!

Lisa Roney says

I read this book with some eagerness, as I'm always glad to hear a whole-systems approach to medicine. However, I ended up being disappointed. I am sure that Dr. Agus is a highly intelligent man who has made strides in his field of oncology, but I am unimpressed with the job that his ghostwriter did. The book relies very heavily on standard health advice—get plenty of sleep and exercise, eat whole foods, try to be less sedentary, etc. And even what's offered as "new"—take baby aspirin and a statin drug after age 40, throw out your vitamin supplements, and wear comfortable shoes—are really not all that new. If you hadn't heard about these debates and suggestions already, then you weren't paying much attention.

That doesn't mean that there aren't good things about this book. I celebrate any physician who is trying to focus on preventive medicine and who believes in empowering people with information about their health. He is absolutely right that we need to do things differently in health care, and he has some good ideas about what some of those things are. His orientation toward the wealthy and the celebrity aspects of his work lead him astray a bit. But I do think his intentions are a step in the right direction.

Still, for me, this book is flawed in a few important ways:

- 1) The entire first part felt a lot like an infomercial for genetic testing. Dr. Agus admits that he is part owner of a genetic testing corporation, which he names, but that still didn't ease my sense of having paid for a book that was a big promotion for his profit-making corporation. It was almost as if they sat around the corporate board room and asked, "How can we get more customers? Oh, let's put out a book that is really an ad. We'll

have profits from the book AND more genetic testing customers.” And the thing is that Agus’s particular corporation doesn’t get good reviews online. Wired noted that it is overpriced even compared with similar companies. And most of us do not have health insurance that will help pay for it, nor do we have doctors that can interpret the information obtained. Dr. Agus’s fantasy of health care that is tailored to the individual based on genetic screening is both futuristic and out of the reach of most people financially.

2) In his chapter on tossing out vitamin supplements, Agus notes two things: a) correlation is not the same as causation and b) animal and petri-dish studies don’t always apply to the whole human person. I couldn’t be happier for someone to say this. Yet, as the book progresses and Agus turns to his causes, he uses the same kind of questionable study results as though correlation IS causation and as though animal and lab studies CAN be generalized to people. There are many examples, but, for instance, on p. 255, he uses a study of rats to claim that people need downtime. Now, I believe in downtime, but this study doesn’t prove its need. He also does this with the issue of “positive” people living longer or surviving cancer longer—a chicken and egg question if ever there was one. And he notes in cavalier fashion that “study after study” shows that happier people live longer. That does not mean, I will remind him, that the happiness causes people to live longer. This is a classic confusion of correlation and causation, which he criticized before. Maybe I’m missing something, and I certainly don’t have the same level of expertise at analyzing medical studies that Agus has. But, something is inconsistent here.

3) Agus claims that we need to become personally responsible for our health, and I am certainly a person who has years of experience doing so. But he hedges about the need for universal health care. While he does cite the brutal statistics involving our health care system (p. 296-297), he also notes that “we need health-care reform at a much more basic and fundamental level before we can get to the financial end of it” (p. 279). I think he has it backwards. In fact, Agus calls on all of us to gather our own health data and share it fearlessly so that large-scale analysis of such data can be conducted. That is a great idea, but it is not likely to happen as long as the health insurance industry is able to disenfranchise any of us at a moment’s notice and as long as people are discriminated against because of their health standing, and, in fact, can’t get independent health insurance with certain pre-existing conditions. Agus notes that many corporate fitness programs do collect data anonymously and preserve individuals’ privacy. Would that I trusted that would always continue. But I know full well that those policies can change with the political climate. As long as profit is the motive for the health insurance industry, then some individuals will always have the potential to have their health information held against them. To assert otherwise is unrealistic.

Lena says

David Agus would like us to rethink our relationship to health. In this book, he presents what he believes is a radical new approach to taking care of ourselves.

The twentieth century was filled with powerful medical successes that were gained by drilling down and focusing on the tiniest pieces of our medical story - things like viruses and bacteria. But as we progress into a new millennium, Agus argues that our new advances will come not from looking at the pieces but looking at the whole.

Cancer is one disease that has proven stubbornly resistant to the 19th century approach, and Agus uses it as an example to outline new technologies and ideas that he thinks can help us conquer this emperor of all maladies and other systemic health problems such as heart disease.

To anyone who has spent time dabbling in alternative medicine, Agus' systems approach will not seem radical at all. The difference, however, is that Agus' approach is based on science and technology, rather than ancient mystical theories of holism.

The topics he addresses range from the personalization of medicine and the promise of a future in which doctors will be able to use genetic testing to target specific treatments for maximum effectiveness to how aggregating and analyzing the hoards of medical data computers have made available can cause great leaps forward in medical progress.

A good chunk of this book is also dedicated to the topic of prevention. Science has figured out quite a few things that can help us reduce our risk of disease, many which will already be familiar to most people, but a few of which, such as the effect of statin drugs on inflammation, which were new to me.

There is some interesting and useful information scattered throughout this book, but I did not find it to be the kind of riveting read that the title would suggest. Much in the portrait he paints of new medicine is still theoretical and, while interesting, not of much practical use. As he writes, he varies between being too technically detailed and too simplistically repetitive. I found myself experiencing modestly inspired hope as we described where medicine is headed, but the picture is still fuzzy enough that I walked away from this book without much to hold onto.
