

## **Review of: Hébert, P. (2016) Good Medicine: The Art of Ethical Care in Canada**

Massimo Orsini

Volume 1, Number 2, 2018

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1058282ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1058282ar>

[See table of contents](#)

### Publisher(s)

Programmes de bioéthique, École de santé publique de l'Université de Montréal

### ISSN

2561-4665 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

### Cite this review

Orsini, M. (2018). Review of [Review of: Hébert, P. (2016) Good Medicine: The Art of Ethical Care in Canada]. *Canadian Journal of Bioethics / Revue canadienne de bioéthique*, 1 (2), 76–76. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1058282ar>

All Rights Reserved ©, 2018 Massimo Orsini



This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

**érudit**

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

## COMPTE RENDU / REVIEW

**Review of: Hébert, P. (2016) *Good Medicine: The Art of Ethical Care in Canada***Massimo Orsini<sup>1</sup>**Mots clés**

éthique, soins de santé, médecin, Canada

**Keywords**

ethics, health care, physician, Canada

*Good Medicine: The Art of Ethical Care in Canada* [1] is a collection of true stories that implore the reader to consider and challenge the appropriate boundaries between medical *treatment* and medical *care*. These stories are shared from the perspective of Dr. Philip Hébert, Professor Emeritus at the University of Toronto's Department of Family and Community Medicine. Drawing on his experiences as a physician, a patient, and an educator, Hébert's *Good Medicine* advocates the importance of empathic care in medical practice, emphasizing the primacy of good communication at every stage of the patient-physician relationship.

The book explores a variety of topics faced by practitioners, ethicists, jurists and patients alike: consent to medical treatment, the boundaries of informed consent, capacity, end of life care, assisted dying, and more broadly, the patient-physician relationship. Each of these topics are addressed through the lived experiences of the author as well as his patients, each meriting their own chapters. The book reads easily and eloquently, and is appropriate for general public. While *Good Medicine* is accessible to the average reader in ways dissimilar to most texts in the field of medical ethics, the practical value of this book to clinicians and patients should not be underestimated. Traditional educational texts are seldomly capable of capturing the ambiguous realities of medical practices. Relying on lived experiences, Hébert captures these realities effectively, displaying the real-world ambiguities incumbent upon a physician navigating the healthcare system as an institution, while also managing patient expectations and unprofessional personal biases.

Within his book, Hébert suggests that the practice of the eponymous "good medicine" entails more than a steadfast endeavour to treat illness. It requires a careful, curious, and holistic approach, placing credence upon the patient's experience and wishes. The stories told by the author exemplify the value of communication and active listening in the medical practice. Absent such communication, the author argues, the practice of medicine is at best frustrating for the patient, and at worst, the source of negligent outcomes. These stories include that of a patient whose dermatological symptoms were but a red herring for more insidious ailments, overlooked by dismissive physicians for want of more careful examination. They include the story of the author's own father, who lived most of his life mortally aware of an arterial-venous malformation that could one day claim his life, and the value of advanced directives for when such a day would come. At the crossroads of personal convictions, religion, and resource allocation, the book also tells the infamous story of Hassan Rasouli, and the plight of his family before the medical system and even the Supreme Court in their efforts to secure life support for a patient deemed to be beyond the realm of recovery.

Using stories as allegorical vehicles to impart important lessons, Hébert's *Good Medicine* succeeds in highlighting the human element of medicine, placing emphatic care on the same footing as technical expertise. His stories are as poignant as they are enjoyable to read. Though secondary sources and citations are lacking, Hébert's use of a passive voice in *Good Medicine* makes it accessible for a wide audience. The book deserves a space on the bookshelves of aspiring and practicing physicians, lawyers, ethicists, and merits the attention of the public at large.

**Conflit d'intérêts**

Aucun déclaré

**Conflicts of Interest**

None to declare

**Édition/Editors:** Dianne Godkin, Andrew F. Ross, Patrick Gogognon**Affiliations**<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Law, McGill University, Montréal, Canada**Correspondance / Correspondence:** Massimo Orsini, [Massimo.orsini@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:Massimo.orsini@mail.mcgill.ca)**Reçu/Received:** 9 Sept 2018      **Publié/Published:** 25 Oct 2018 ([CBS/SCB](#): Aug 2018)

Les éditeurs suivront les recommandations et les procédures décrites dans le [Code of Conduct and Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors](#) de COPE. Plus précisément, ils travaillent pour s'assurer des plus hautes normes éthiques de la publication, y compris l'identification et la gestion des conflits d'intérêts (pour les éditeurs et pour les auteurs), la juste évaluation des manuscrits et la publication de manuscrits qui répondent aux normes d'excellence de la revue.

The editors follow the recommendations and procedures outlined in the COPE [Code of Conduct and Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors](#). Specifically, the editors will work to ensure the highest ethical standards of publication, including: the identification and management of conflicts of interest (for editors and for authors), the fair evaluation of manuscripts, and the publication of manuscripts that meet the journal's standards of excellence.

**References**

1. Hébert P. *Good Medicine: The Art of Ethical Care in Canada*, Toronto, Doubleday Canada, 2016.

