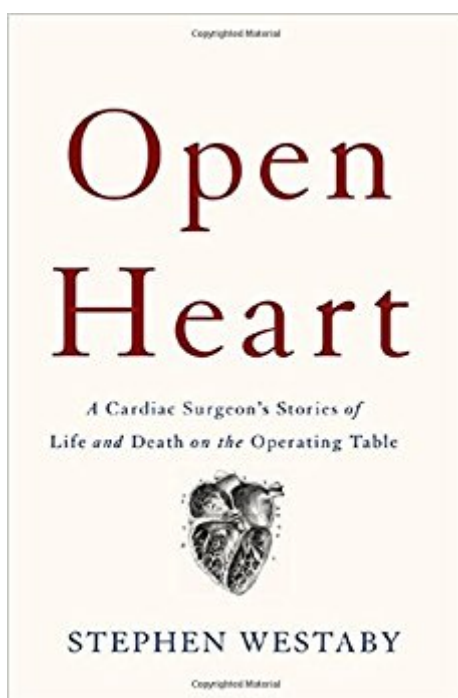


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# Open Heart: A Cardiac Surgeon's Stories Of Life And Death On The Operating Table



## Synopsis

In gripping prose, one of the world's leading cardiac surgeons lays bare both the wonder and the horror of a life spent a heartbeat away from death. When Stephen Westaby witnessed a patient die on the table during open-heart surgery for the first time, he was struck by the quiet, determined way the surgeons walked away. As he soon understood, this detachment is a crucial survival strategy in a profession where death is only a heartbeat away. In *Open Heart*, Westaby reflects on over 11,000 surgeries, showing us why the procedures have never become routine and will never be. With astonishing compassion, he recounts harrowing and sometimes hopeful stories from his operating room: we meet a pulseless man who lives with an electric heart pump, an expecting mother who refuses surgery unless the doctors let her pregnancy reach full term, and a baby who gets a heart transplant only to die once it's in place. For readers of Atul Gawande's *Being Mortal* and of Henry Marsh's *Do No Harm*, *Open Heart* offers a soul-baring account of a life spent in constant confrontation with death.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"In this unsentimental account, a British doctor offers gripping stories of operations and blasts the National Health Service for failing to pay for lifesaving equipment. The deaths that truly madden him are those that could have been prevented with available technologies."--New York Times Book Review, Editor's Choice  
"In *Open Heart*, British cardiac surgeon Stephen Westaby shares often astonishing stories of his own operating-room experiences, illuminating the science and art of his

specialty through the patients whose lives he has saved and, in some cases, lost....What makes Dr. Westaby's stories so compelling...is that he can't quite suppress his humanity."--Wall Street Journal"Refreshingly, Westaby does not put a positive spin on suffering or cleave to false optimism... a reminder that nationalized medicine might ease the racial and economic injustices that currently determine which people die too soon, but it wouldn't spell the end of medically preventable deaths." --New York Times Book Review "Westaby's highly readable OPEN HEART is part memoir, part how-to (perform open-heart surgery, that is) and part All Creatures Great and Small-style reflection, with stories throughout about cases he's encountered during his journey from eager medical student to seen-it-all senior physician... a heart-tugger, and a fascinating read."--BookPage "A cracking example of a thriving sub-genre of autobiography, the medical memoir. Anyone who enjoyed the 2014 bestseller Do No Harm by the brain surgeon Henry Marsh, a friend of Westaby's, will relish [this book], too... Each story is gripping, written in a vivid, almost brutal way that matches the blood and gore of cardiac surgery." -Financial Times "[Westaby's] writing is bluff, workmanlike and thrilling... a frank and absorbing memoir by a man who has done about as much direct good to his fellow human beings as it is possible to do in one lifetime."-The Times, Book of the Week "British surgeon and artificial heart pioneer Stephen Westaby's Open Heart is a thrilling memoir of some of his most challenging cases... Each case is more astonishing than the next."--Shelf Awareness "[A] dazzling memoir." --Publishers Weekly, starred review"A first-rate memoir from a British heart surgeon... required reading for medical students and hospital-show junkies but also for anyone curious to learn about hearts and the heroic measures to save them." --Kirkus Reviews, starred review "The stakes could not be higher in this bloody, muscular and adrenaline-charged memoir from a pioneering heart surgeon... at points it made my own heart race dangerously." -Sunday Times"At the cutting-edge of scalpel-lit... I love getting a window into this world... I enjoyed so much in this book - the anatomy lesson, the vivid descriptions, the fervour Westaby feels for his work." -Evening Standard"Profoundly powerful." -Literary Review (UK)"Westaby is everything you would hope from a maverick surgical genius: authoritative, engaged, passionate and opinionated. His book, annoyingly well written for someone who has penned only medical papers and handbooks, reads like a thriller, except with rather more corpses." -The Times (UK)"A full-frontal and thrilling portrayal. Each story in this fascinating book brings a new nail-biting surgical adventure... A gifted surgeon, Westaby is also a natural writer... [Open Heart] succeeds on many levels: political battle cry, chronicle of bloody feats, history of modern cardiology, tribute to patients and paean to surgery."-Daily Telegraph"Remarkable." -Daily Mirror "Powerful... [this book] is not for the faint-hearted; breast bones are sawn apart, body fluids gush, but empathy isn't absent."

-Observer"An informative read." --Irish Independent "Dr. Westaby, a master cardiac surgeon, seamlessly assumes the role of a master storyteller, presenting a lifetime of experience that is as informative as it is riveting." --Joseph S. Coselli, M.D., Professor of Cardiac Surgery at Baylor College of Medicine, Texas Heart Institute

Stephen Westaby is a pioneer in artificial heart technology and serves as Consultant Cardiac Surgeon at the John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford. He lives in Oxford, UK.

After reading Manu Kalia's book "I Think I Need a New Heart: The Journey from Heart Failure to Transplant" this book came up in my suggested reading list Westaby is a world class surgeon - in England and each story he tells is about a surgery that he's performed over the years. I learned a LOT about cardiac intervention and mechanical devices. His stories are interesting to read, and scary as well. A lot of slicing and dicing going on!

This book is dramatic, heartbreaking and wonky about the science and efforts made to save lives. A nice combination of terror, effort and brave people enduring the most difficult physical deficiencies and their amazing coping mechanisms. It also spotlights the dedication and commitment of the doctors who are tasked with and passionate about helping pave new ways of delivering a better life to those suffering from heart failure.

Fascinating, illuminating and very interesting read. I bought a second copy to give to my daughter who is an RN and worked 11 years in the NHS.

perhaps too detailed for the faint of heart but very informative

Very explanatory, detailed and it's just a really good read.

Eye opening. Well written.

I thoroughly enjoyed Stephen Westaby's memoir *Open Heart, A Cardiac Surgeon's Story of Life and Death on the Operating Table*. This book is a collection of stories about his patients who he helped over the years with cardiac surgery. He was a pioneer in the use of the left ventricular assist device that saved the lives of patients with heart failure. I found him to be humble

in describing his accomplishments and frustrated with the national health care system in England. So many patients could have been helped but were refused due to cost. Dr. Westaby is an excellent writer and I was totally absorbed in his stories about his patients. He shared both good and bad outcomes and was very reflective as he reviewed his surgical career.

Be aware that although this is a good book this publisher has copied the actual title which is 'Fragile Lives' by this British author so you are paying twice the price as it comes from the USA and a copy. I got one thinking it was a sequel by this author only to find it is the same book and to return it for a refund will cost me about £40 so I am stuck with it!

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