



The Woman in the Surgeon's Body

Joan CASSELL

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Surgery is the most martial and masculine of medical specialties. The combat with death is carried out in the operating room, where the intrepid surgeon challenges the forces of destruction and disease. What, then, if the surgeon is a woman? Anthropologist Joan Cassell enters this closely guarded arena to explore the work and lives of women practicing their craft in what is largely a man's world.

Cassell observed thirty-three surgeons in five North American cities over the course of three years. We follow these women through their grueling days: racing through corridors to make rounds, perform operations, hold office hours, and teach residents. We hear them, in their own words, discuss their training and their relations with patients, nurses, colleagues, husbands, and children.

Do these women differ from their male colleagues? And if so, do such differences affect patient care? The answers Cassell uncovers are as complex and fascinating as the issues she considers. A unique portrait of the day-to-day reality of these remarkable women, *The Woman in the Surgeon's Body* is an insightful account of how being female influences the way the surgeon is perceived by colleagues, nurses, patients, and superiors—and by herself.

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