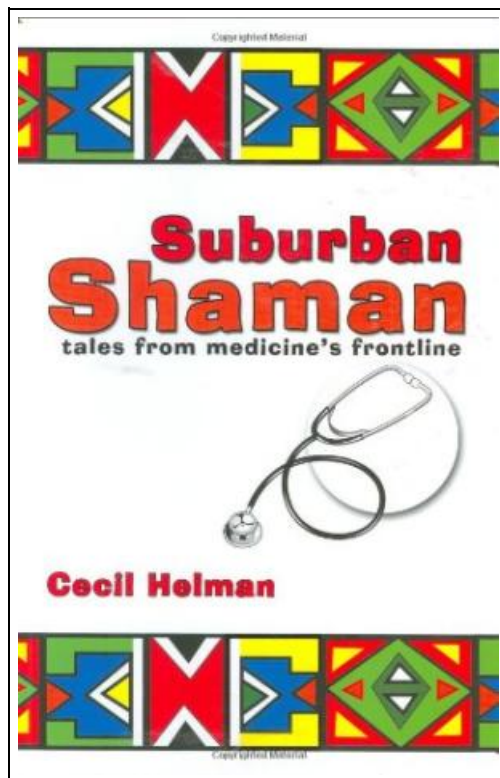


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Reviews

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SUBURBAN SHAMAN: TALES FROM MEDICINE'S FRONT LINE



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Hammersmith Press Limited. Paperback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, Suburban Shaman: Tales from Medicine's Front Line, Cecil Helman, 'To be a good doctor you have to be a compassionate chameleon, a shape shifter - a shaman. Even if your adaptation to your patients' world happens at an unconscious level you should always work within their system of ideas, never against it.' So writes Cecil Helman after 27 years as a family practitioner in the suburbs of North London interlaced with training and research as a medical anthropologist, comparing a wide variety of health systems. This unique combination of frontline health worker and detached academic informs the many stories that make up this fascinating book. It also informs the author's shared insights into what these stories can teach us about ourselves and our own attitudes to health and illness, whether we are deliverers or recipients of health care. With humour and gentle humaneness, Helman's colourful stories take the reader on a journey from apartheid South Africa, where he did his initial training, to the London of the early 1970s, where for a short time he foreswore medicine to become an anthropologist and poet; from ship's doctor on a Mediterranean cruise to family practitioner in London; from observer of curative trance dances in the favelas of Brazil to consulting with sangomas in South Africa. While trained in the Western tradition and with many years of practice in that system, Helman's anthropological insight leads him to view illness in a wider personal, social and cosmic context, considering elements beyond the purely physical, as do shamans and other traditional doctors. In pleading for this age-old holistic approach, he celebrates family medicine which 'in its quiet and unassuming way, and every day of the week, is still at the very frontline of human suffering'.



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