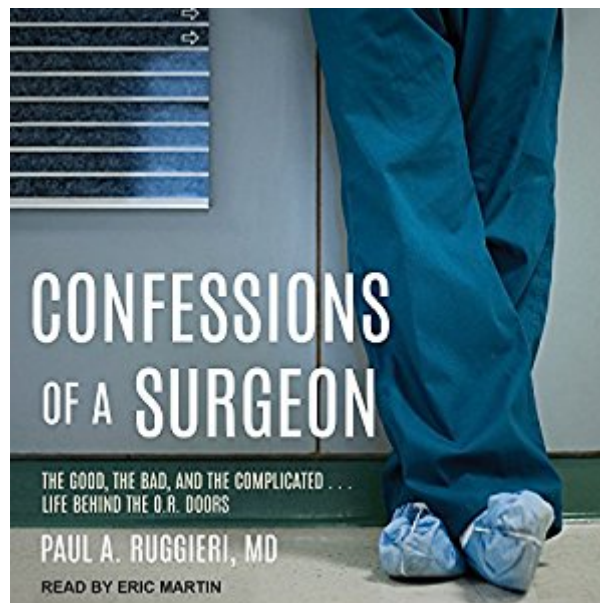




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# **Confessions Of A Surgeon: The Good, The Bad, And The Complicated...Life Behind The O.R. Doors**



## Synopsis

As an active surgeon and former department chairman, Dr. Paul A. Ruggieri has seen the good, the bad, and the ugly of his profession. In *Confessions of a Surgeon*, he pushes open the doors of the OR and reveals the inscrutable place where lives are improved, saved, and sometimes lost. He shares the successes, failures, remarkable advances, and camaraderie that make it exciting. He uncovers the truth about the abusive, exhaustive training and the arduous devotion of his old-school education. He explores the 24-hour challenges that come from patients and their loved ones; the ethics of saving the lives of repugnant criminals; the hot-button issues of health care, lawsuits, and reimbursements; and the true cost of running a private practice. And he explains the influence of the "white coat code of silence" and why patients may never know what really transpires during surgery. Ultimately, Dr. Ruggieri lays bare an occupation that to most is as mysterious and unfamiliar as it is misunderstood. His account is passionate, illuminating, and often shocking - an eye-opening, never-before-seen look at real life, and death, in the OR.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I originally bought this book in the Kindle version but then wanted to give it as a gift to a doctor friend so I bought this hard-cover version for him. The author, a successful surgeon, is remarkably forthright in his descriptions of the life of a surgeon, covering his days in medical school to his early practice and later as a more experienced and respected practitioner. It is his openness about his mistakes that makes the book so interesting. I certainly admire him. He is not happy with the way

the practice of medicine is moving today and spends a lot of time refuting it. That part can seem a bit preachy but the book is well worth it.

Perhaps i am biased because i am a senior heart surgeon and trained in an era slightly earlier than Dr Ruggieri. I think that he certainly captures what many of us feel and have articulated ad nauseum. There, unfortunately, is no one listening. Or, if they are, they are impotent to act in any meaningful way. I too will retire in about 2 months. I still have my skills and I have certainly developed judgement over the years. But, at what cost and is the cost too high to continue? For me it is. To those who reviewed this book as written by a 'repetitive whiner,' i would only say that it is impossible to know what a GOOD Dr goes through caring for patients unless you have been in that role! Sure, Drs are compensated well and as one reviewer opined, "the average Gen Surg makes \$300K/yr!" But what price/cost is one's life when saved by a caring and compassionate surgeon who makes the correct decisions and has the proper skills to execute those series of decisions? Of course we cannot do all by ourselves and the nurses and aides are the unsung heroes in this story. Although Dr Ruggieri certainly paid homage to them in the writing. Bravo Dr Ruggieri. A great book that hits the high/true points admirably in this Reader's opinion!

As one who has also trained in surgery during his era, I very much appreciated the author's candid and accurate portrayal of life as a surgeon. His description of the brutality of surgical residency training in the 1970s and 80s is right on. He implies that the 100-120 hour weeks spent in the hospital as a surgical resident results in superior training vs the current residency mandate that limits it to 80 hours per week. That outcome is yet to be established. One aspect that he emphasizes is the looming shortage of surgeons in the USA. As he states, it takes in essence decades for a surgeon to be "complete" and I agree. This is becoming a major issue for the future of healthcare needs for all of the developed world. I think health professionals such as med students, nurses and those in related disciplines will get the most out of this book. The author has attempted to write about his profession in a manner so that a lay audience could better understand the "mystique" of being a surgeon. That is not an easy task to complete for a general audience. I see from other reviews that some have misinterpreted his message and seem to be intimidated by the author. I believe he wrote the book for the opposite effect. GK, M.D.

While Paul Ruggieri's prose is simplistic, straightforward, and easy to comprehend, he damages his narrative by constantly referring to the downsides of his profession. Ruggieri's cynicism towards his

profession stems from his experiences with malpractice lawsuits and the hassle of continued litigation. There is a moment in his book where he explicitly details his disappointment towards his fellow surgeons when one of them offers him on the chopping block for a mistake made during a surgery. It is clear throughout his book that Ruggieri is embittered and disillusioned about his career following this choice. There is even a mention in his frustrations that he wishes he had obtained an MBA instead of an MD. I enjoyed Ruggieri's blunt and honest approach towards his eye-opening memoirs of the dark side of his surgery career, but at the same time, I found his book lacking the passion and vocation that I believe surgeons ought to have (given their profession). He doesn't seem to enjoy his work. Because of this, his book lacks soul and compassion. Perhaps, given the nature of his work to stay detached from his patients, that's the point.

Reading this book feels like having a long chat with a friend from childhood with whom you still feel comfortable sharing everything. Many books about medicine focus on just the cases, some are oriented towards the training, but this book covers this and more. Readers get a sense not just of the training and practice of surgery, but what a surgeon thinks as well as a sobering admission that the world of surgery is subject to the same human frailties as anything else. Not every operation is a technical success, sometimes things go wrong due to the inexact nature of the field and sometimes due to error. Dr. Ruggieri covers a broad swath in this book. One thing you'll learn is that a critical factor, a factor that unfortunately you as a patient can only tease out indirectly, is the ability of your surgeon to recover from the inevitable surprises and complications during a surgery. Fixing problems is huge. Furthermore not all surgeons are cut from the same cloth, but even though hospitals collect statistics on complication rates the patients are never allowed to see this. Dr. Ruggieri also talks about the changes in training in the time since he went thru, the impact of lawsuits on how doctors view their profession and treat patients, the grueling hours, and much more. In summary if you want to get an understanding of what is on the mind of surgeons today, a sense of what they do, and implicitly some advice on how to pick a good surgeon should you need one, this is a book worth reading.

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