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Immunity



Synopsis

This significant book conveys Dr. William E. Paul's enduring enthusiasm for the field of immunology, the incredible accomplishments of the past half-century, and the future's untapped promises. The immune system has incredible power to protect us from the ravages of infection by killing disease-causing microbes or eliminating them from the body. Boosted by vaccines, it can protect us individually and as a "herd" from diseases such as measles. As Dr. Paul explains, however, the power of the immune system is a double-edged sword: an overactive immune system can wreak havoc, destroying normal tissue and causing diseases such as type I diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, and multiple sclerosis. The consequences of an impaired immune system, on the other hand, are all too evident in the clinical agonies of AIDS and other immunodeficiency diseases. Packed with illustrations, stories from Dr. Paul's distinguished career, and compelling narratives of scientific discovery, *Immunity* presents the three laws of the human immune system—universality, tolerance, and appropriateness—and explains how the system protects and harms us. From the tale of how smallpox was overcome to the lessons of the Ebola epidemic to the utility of vaccines and the hope that the immune system can be used to treat or prevent cancer, Dr. Paul argues that we must position ourselves to take advantage of cutting-edge technologies and promising new tools in immunological research, including big data and the microbiome.

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Customer Reviews

I was expecting something very different from *Immunity*. Instead of an autobiography concerning the

life and career of one of the world's most eminent immunologist, I got a mix of dry textbook and autobiography. I don't know if I consider this a good or bad thing, but I definitely think this book is written for a specific audience and it's not the lay man. William E Paul, a prominent member at the National Institute of Health has written plenty of academic texts on immunology, held roles as president of American Association of Immunologists and the American Society for Clinical Investigation, a director of NIH's AIDs research division and has been an editor of the Annual Review of Immunology volumes 1 through 30. It's not surprising that during his career he has met plenty of medical rock stars and contributed heavily in modern immunology research. I can't imagine a better person to write an novel on immunity geared towards doctors without a PhD in Immunology. The main focus of Immunity seems to be on basics of the human immune system, leaps in immunology research both past and present and the changing environment of immunology in the face of funding changes throughout the decades: The success rate (the number of grant applications funded divided by the number submitted) has dropped from 30 percent in 2003 to 19 percent in 2012. Effectively that means that many talented individuals, particularly younger scientists, will fail to obtain research support and may leave science, cutting off a future generation. Immunity took me a few months to read, often with breaks between chapters because I required plenty of research on the basics of Immunology before I could continue.

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