



The Spark of Life: Electricity in the Human Body

By Frances Ashcroft

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“A gem that sparkles.”—William Bynum, *Wall Street Journal*

What happens during a heart attack? Can someone really die of fright? What is death, anyway? How does electroshock treatment affect the brain? What is consciousness? The answers to these questions lie in the electrical signals constantly traveling through our bodies, driving our thoughts, our movements, and even the beating of our hearts.

The history of how scientists discovered the role of electricity in the human body is a colorful one, filled with extraordinary personalities, fierce debates, and brilliant experiments. Moreover, present-day research on electricity and ion channels has created one of the most exciting fields in science, shedding light on conditions ranging from diabetes and allergies to cystic fibrosis, migraines, and male infertility. With inimitable wit and a clear, fresh voice, award-winning researcher Frances Ashcroft weaves together compelling real-life stories with the latest scientific findings, giving us a spectacular account of the body electric.

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Editorial Review

Review

This is a wonderful book. Frances Ashcroft has a rare gift for making difficult subjects accessible and fascinating -- Bill Bryson Selected as one of the Ten Books to look out for in 2012 New Scientist The more incredible the process, the more elegant Ashcroft's explanation...achieves the sort of rich simplicity most science writers can only dream about -- Simon Ings Seven magazine, Daily Telegraph Lively, conversational prose - refreshingly accessible Daily Telegraph Fascinating Nature Compelling and very readable ... Do read this excellent book Literary Review

About the Author

Frances Ashcroft is Professor of Physiology at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of Trinity College Oxford. She is also Director of OXION, a consortium of scientists studying ion channels, the heroes of this book. Her scientific research focuses on how a rise in your blood sugar level stimulates the release of insulin and what why this process goes wrong in diabetes. She has won many prizes for her research, most recently the L'Oréal/UNESCO 2012 Women in Science award. Her first book for the general reader was Life at the Extremes: The Science of Survival.

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