



Medicine's 10 Greatest Discoveries (Yale Nota Bene)

By Meyer Friedman, Gerald W. Friedland M.D.

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In 1675, Antony van Leeuwenhoek, an unlearned haberdasher from Delft, placed a drop of rainwater under his microscope and detected thousands of tiny animals in it. Leeuwenhoek proceeded to examine the microscopic activity of his spittle, teeth plaque, and feces, and as the result of his findings the field of bacteriology was born. Some two hundred years later, Wilhelm Conrad Roentgen, a professor of theoretical physics at the University of Wurzburg, invited his wife to his laboratory, asked her to place her hand on an unexposed photographic plate, turned on an electric current, and showed this terrified woman a picture of the bones of her hand. And so came the discovery of the X-ray.

This absorbing book is the first to describe these and eight other monumental medical discoveries throughout history, bringing to life the scientific pioneers responsible for them and the excitement, frustrations, and jealousies that surrounded the final achievements. Two distinguished physicians, Meyer Friedman and Gerald W. Friedland, have drawn on their many years of experience as well as on that of world-renowned antiquarian book dealers, physician collectors of old and new medical publications, and medical school professors to single out these medical breakthroughs from thousands of candidates, and, in several cases, to provide information never before available. Their engrossing stories of the ten most significant discoveries will be read with enjoyment by anyone fascinated by the mysteries of medicine.

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Editorial Review

From Kirkus Reviews

An almost gossipy look of the men who made some of the most significant discoveries in Western medicine. Friedman and Friedland, two physicians whose combined careers encompass over a century of teaching and practicing medicine (Friedman discovered the effect of Type A behavior on the heart), selected their own top ten and then had them vetted by antiquarian book dealers and physician-collectors of rare medical publications. Chronologically, the anatomical observations of Vesalius come first: his *Fabrica* (published in 1543) was, according to Friedman and Friedland, ``so scientific that it initiated medical science itself.'' However, they rate Harveys discovery of the circulation of the blood in the human body as the single most important, because it introduced the principle of experimentation in medicine. Leeuwenhoek is included as the founder of bacteriology, Jenner for introducing vaccination, Crawford Long for the initial use of surgical anesthesia, and Roentgen for discovery of the X-ray beam. Nearly unknown today are Ross Harrison, who first grew living tissue in culture outside an organism, and Nikolai Anichkov, who discovered the primary role of cholesterol in atherosclerosis. Fleming is credited with the discovery of penicillin, but Florey's role in its development is not overlooked. Similarly, the DNA story gives primary credit to Wilkins, while clarifying the role of Watson and Crick in elucidating its structure. In recounting the story of these achievements, the authors devote considerable space to the character and private lives of the men who made them. One's arrogance, another's dullness, their mistaken notions (Harvey believed in witches; Fleming thought of penicillin as simply an external germicide), their good luck and bad marriages, their ambitions all are revealed. The authors conclude that it is not genius so much as curiosity and the ability to conduct a methodological investigation that distinguish them. While Friedman and Friedland's list of the ten best is sure to be questioned, their revealing portraits of notable men of science are memorable. -- *Copyright ©1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

About the Author

Meyer Friedman, M.D., the discoverer of Type A behavior and its relation to heart disease, is director of the Meyer Friedman Institute, University of California San Francisco-Mount Zion Medical Center. In addition to his voluminous medical publications, he has written the bestsellers *Type A Behavior and Your Heart* and *Treating Type A Behavior and Your Heart*. **Gerald W. Friedland, M.D.**, is professor emeritus in the department of radiology at the Stanford University School of Medicine and the author of many books and articles dealing with radiology, anatomy, embryology, physiology, and the history of medicine.

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