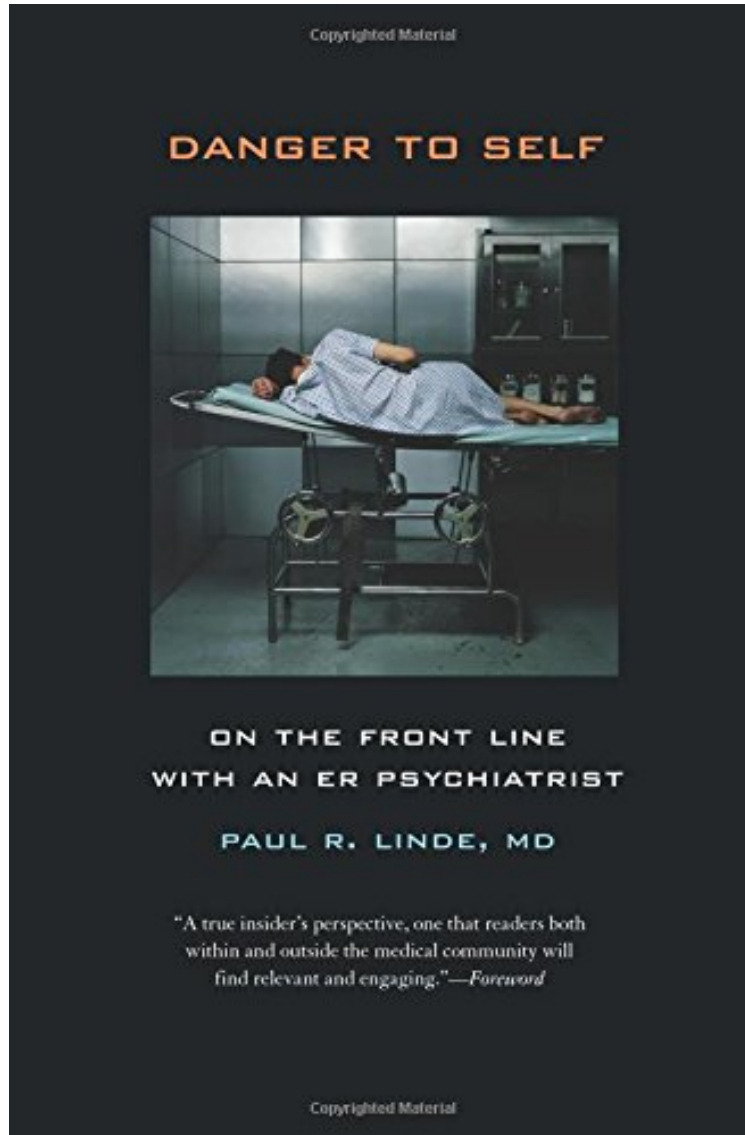


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## Danger to Self: On the Front Line with an ER Psychiatrist

Paul Linde

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**Paul Linde : Danger to Self: On the Front Line with an ER Psychiatrist** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Danger to Self: On the Front Line with an ER Psychiatrist:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great antidote to "Weekends at Bellevue"By BaranabusIf you were repulsed by "Weekends at Bellevue", you will find not only much humanity but much substance (briefly and concisely presented) in Linde's book.Since I've been an um...customer.. in the very same facilities Dr. Linde has worked at, I was most eager to read the book. I've also worked with the mentally ill as well. The way that he frames very crucial issues

was really important and vital to anyone who wants to understand the challenges of dealing with mental illness in the US today, especially issues of homelessness, "Free Will", compliance and non-compliance, and the tricky judgement calls that doctors have to make often with sparse information at hand. There is one sad tale of how he misjudged the suicidality of a patient; and another white-knuckle story of how he had to advocated for a liver transplant for a suicidal patient, a "high risk", as judged by the team that assess who will receive a life-saving transplant- and who will not. It's situations like that that make one say "I wouldn't want your job for the world". The burden of responsibility is great. How reassuring it is to know that someone as caring as Dr. Linde is in that position, as psychiatry is a field highly susceptible to abuse and neglect-- there is a long, sad history of how we arrive at the deinstitutionalization movement that resulted in the droves of ill homeless people we see today. It's very informative to the layman, without being too technical, in terms of laying out the legal, ethical and practical issues of mental health care. As Linde states, professionals may want to refer to more in-depth sources for full coverage of the issues. But I think the general public needs to have better understanding of these matters, so that they can get a sense of why we don't just "lock up those crazy people" and how psychiatrists can't be psychic, and how human rights in this area are quite tricky. Fixing the problem is much easier said than done. Some people in my city (the so-called "homeless capital of America") say that not enough care is out there, that it's a matter of neglect. What they don't realize is how extensive our services are (I've worked in them, and used them) but how the day-today challenges, not to mention legal and philosophical dilemmas, don't make for an easy fix to often intractable illnesses. I hope that everyone who read the best-selling "Weekends" takes the time to get a deeper understanding, as Linde presents it, and not just a 'crazy people freakshow' as some readers seem to want.

31 of 32 people found the following review helpful. Powerful narrative of a San Francisco Emergency Psychiatrist By J. Schultz Dr. Paul Linde, a psychiatrist at SF General Hospital, provides a fascinating glimpse into the mental health issues, patients, and practitioners of an urban psychiatric emergency room in DANGER TO SELF. Loaded with interesting medical information, Linde's first person narrative is presented as a series of stories that are highly readable and convey the various roles asked of psych emergency doctors and nurses (e.g., jailor, jury, or clairvoyant). Written for the educated lay reader, the book not only gives a sense of the atmosphere and problems encountered in psych emergency, but also provides a context in which to understand the complex decisions and value judgments that acute care psychiatrists must make. Dr. Linde has a good grasp of the historical and legal contexts in which decisions need to be made, e.g., how does one protect an individual's civil liberties while maintaining the public's need for safety? When is it morally justifiable to revoke a person's right to freedom? Analysis of these issues and others offer much for the reader to think about further. Dr. Linde writes in the Preface that his intention is to humanize psychiatrists, other mental health professionals, patients, and their loved ones and that it is okay at times to laugh, to swear, to self-reveal, and to cry with patients. Linde's stories convey the humanity and compassion of the doctor-patient relationship in a truly engaging and engrossing manner. In my opinion, Dr. Linde has clearly succeeded.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Interesting and enlightening By Riverspirit Very interesting read! I liked Paul Linde's writing style -- he opens a view to the challenges of his work, but his compassion and empathy for his patients really comes through. I'd hope if I ever end up in a clinical psychiatric situation, I would be lucky enough to be treated by someone like Dr. Linde.

The psychiatric emergency room, a fast-paced combat zone with pressure to match, thrusts its medical providers into the outland of human experience where they must respond rapidly and decisively in spite of uncertainty and, very often, danger. In this lively first-person narrative, Paul R. Linde takes readers behind the scenes at an urban psychiatric emergency room, with all its chaos and pathos, where we witness mental health professionals doing their best to alleviate suffering and repair shattered lives. As he and his colleagues encounter patients who are hallucinating, drunk, catatonic, aggressive, suicidal, high on drugs, paranoid, and physically sick, Linde examines the many ethical, legal, moral, and medical issues that confront today's psychiatric providers. He describes a profession under siege from the outside health insurance companies, the pharmaceutical industry, government regulators, and even patients' rights advocates and from the inside biomedical and academic psychiatrists who have forgotten to care for the patient and have instead become checklist-marking pill-peddlers. While lifting the veil on a crucial area of psychiatry that is as real as it gets, *Danger to Self* also injects a healthy dose of compassion into the practice of medicine and psychiatry.

From Publishers Weekly Linde (Of Spirits and Madness), clinical professor of psychiatry at the University of California San Francisco medical school, performs a remarkably successful balancing act by presenting both the theory and practice of emergency room psychiatry in a compelling manner. He personalizes his cases and demonstrates how essential the human dimension is in high-quality care. Using 10 fascinating case studies from his 17-year career with patients manifesting symptoms from suicidal behavior to catatonia Linde discusses the medical, legal, philosophical and ethical implications of treatment options. He brings the reader along as he is forced to make almost immediate diagnoses and determine courses of treatment, including incarceration, that have the potential to shape (or end) these patients' lives. It becomes abundantly clear that there are rarely simple, straightforward answers. Linde quotes a professional bromide: [t]he only thing that two psychiatrists can agree on is that a third one is wrong. He's a talented

writer and a compassionate doctor who understands what works best for him and his patients: while my head works pretty well, my real strength as a physician comes from the heart. (Jan.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist From Linde's perspective, a psychiatric emergency room doctor is more like a cowboy than a navel-gazing psychiatrist. Judging from the likes of some of the folks he encounters on the job, it indeed appears that such metaphors for psych ER work as wrangling, hog-tying, bull-riding, and herding are more appropriate than, say, meditating. There is also the loneliness factor. While Linde acknowledges the expertise of the San Francisco General Hospital psych ER team he works with, in the end, it is his call whether a patient be admitted for additional assessment and/or treatment. It is his decision, that is, with consideration for the latest laws governing involuntary confinement and whether or not the patient's insurer will cover treatment. It is also his call whether to treat patients according to the current psychiatric trend or buck the system. Taking into consideration everything from his phlegmatic attitude toward his patients' antics to the ever-evolving restrictions, political and financial, hamstringing his ability to do his job, Linde seems well suited to life as a lonesome cowboy. -- Donna Chavez Immerses the reader in the at times raw, often maddening and messy arena of a psychiatric emergency room doctor's life.