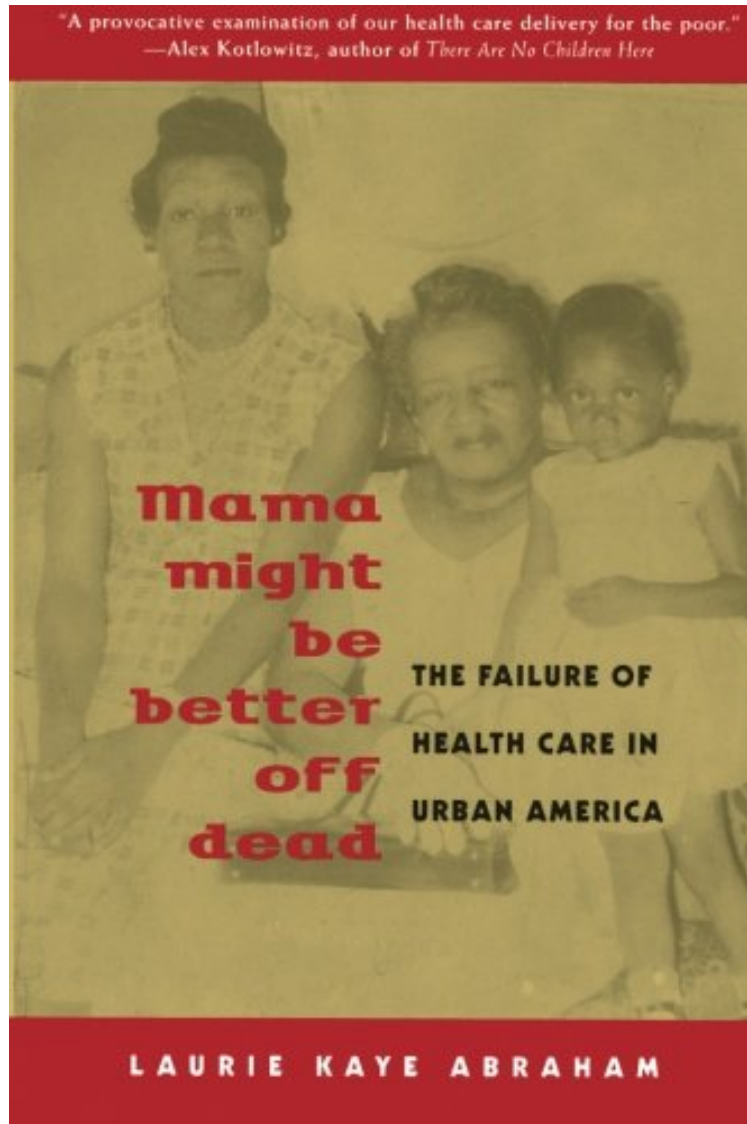


(Download free ebook) Mama Might Be Better Off Dead: The Failure of Health Care in Urban America

Mama Might Be Better Off Dead: The Failure of Health Care in Urban America

Laurie Kaye Abraham

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Laurie Kaye Abraham : Mama Might Be Better Off Dead: The Failure of Health Care in Urban America
before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Mama Might Be Better Off Dead: The Failure of Health Care in Urban America*:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Classic Health Policy Title on Urban Health By Professor Even though this book appears quite dated as this point - it is remarkable how it might have happened today. This is an

influential work detailing the failure of urban health and is a key read for anyone interested in health policy. The history is approachable here and takes place in Chicago. If you purchase this book realize you are purchasing a scholarly book which balances the "story" of how urban health fails in inner cities and limits the characterization of the individuals in the stories. I found Abraham's writing style helpful because it is "neutral" and so many health policy books appear to have an underlying agenda. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Needs better title! By ArtGirlHad to read this book for a Medical Sociology course. I thought the title was a bit odd, but when I started reading the story of this one family that the author follows -- I couldn't put it down. I wanted to know what happened to these people. Their story could be the story of ANY family. It is not a happy story, but it is necessary to show how some people struggle to get adequate health care. For those who have super health care plans and no problem paying their co-pays or have never had a problem finding a doctor -- this is a book you should read. Just like many people are one paycheck away from being homeless, that also means being one paycheck away from having health insurance. It shows how the US health care system has contributed to many disparities in health. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Mama might be better off dead The failure of healthcare in urban america By Connie J. Sides Abraham presents facts and statistics of poor African Americans through the story of four generations in a poor Chicago family as they go through life navigating the health care system. The story is presented from a very fact based point of view. It includes the trials of Mrs. Jackson, the grandmother; Tommy, the son; Jackie, the caretaker and Tommy's daughter; Robert Banes, Jackie's husband; and their three children. Abraham presents the trouble deciding which jobs to take and how it will affect the overall family income when many jobs don't provide insurance. Statistics are presented on lack of family education about programs available for programs that would have not added income or taken away assistance they were already receiving. This book took into account the physician's assigned to the case when the patient is admitted without a primary physician, multiple residents and having to explain issues multiple times. Residents and physicians do not always look at the overall picture but the latest issue. Even the lack of physicians discussing do not resuscitate orders with the family when Mrs. Jackson is close to death was brought to light. I would like to ask the author what happened after the grandmother died and Robert received his transplant. How did the loss of SSI change their status and the outcome of their healthcare and financial status? Overall I give this book a 4 (very good). I agree with the author's position and policies set forth to help the poor are not working and need some serious revamping. I only rate it a four because of the tediousness of the information make it a hard to get through. This is a great read for those who want to do public policy dealing with healthcare reform and anyone interested in the plight of the poor having to negotiate the current system.

Mama Might Be Better Off Dead is an unsettling, profound look at the human face of health care. Both disturbing and illuminating, it immerses readers in the lives of four generations of a poor, African-American family beset with the devastating illnesses that are all too common in America's inner-cities. The story takes place in North Lawndale, a neighborhood that lies in the shadows of Chicago's Loop. Although surrounded by some of the city's finest medical facilities, North Lawndale is one of the sickest, most medically underserved communities in the country. Headed by Jackie Banes, who oversees the care of a diabetic grandmother, a husband on kidney dialysis, an ailing father, and three children, the Banes family contends with countless medical crises. From visits to emergency rooms and dialysis units, to trials with home care, to struggles for Medicaid eligibility, Abraham chronicles their access (or lack of access) to medical care. Told sympathetically but without sentimentality, their story reveals an inadequate health care system that is further undermined by the direct and indirect effects of poverty. When people are poor, they become sick easily. When people are sick, their families quickly become poorer. Embedded in the family narrative is a lucid analysis of the gaps, inconsistencies, and inequalities the poor face when they seek health care. This book reveals what health care policies crafted in Washington, D. C. or state capitals look like when they hit the street. It shows how Medicaid and Medicare work and don't work, the Catch-22s of hospital financing in the inner city, the racial politics of organ transplants, the failure of childhood immunization programs, the vexed issues of individual responsibility and institutional paternalism. One observer puts it this way: "Show me the poor woman who finds a way to get everything she's entitled to in the system, and I'll show you a woman who could run General Motors." Abraham deftly weaves these themes together to make a persuasive case for health care reform while unflinchingly presenting the complexities that will make true reform as difficult as it is necessary. *Mama Might Be Better Off Dead* is a book with the power to change the way health care is understood in America. For those seeking to learn what our current system of health care promises and what it delivers, it offers a place for the debate to begin.

From Publishers Weekly The vicious circle of poverty and illness is powerfully portrayed in Abraham's (*Reinventing Home*) account of an uninsured, black, four-generational family in one of Chicago's "poorest and sickest" neighborhoods. Included in their medical misfortunes: the amputation of both legs of a diabetic grandmother; a drug-addicted husband on kidney dialysis who undergoes a kidney transplant; a partially stroke-paralyzed son; and children who lack primary care and immunization. This personally observed, lucid chronicle and call for reform of our ailing health system covers all levels of responsibility in the medical establishment, and deserves scrutiny by our

administration's health service planners. Abraham concludes that a reformed health care system should set limits on health spending while stressing "caring" over "curing." Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal This is a refreshing chronicle of the inadequate patchwork of federally funded health programs caring for our nation's urban poor. Journalist Abraham uses the medically plagued Banes family as a springboard for his analyses of the convoluted, mysterious, and at times nonsensical healthcare system that holds the urban poor captive. Unlike Alex Kotlowitz, whose *There Are No Children Here* (LJ 4/1/91) elucidates the glaring inequities in our social system through the powerful story of two boys, Abraham uses the Banes's ill health as a pulpit for reciting numerous studies, quoting scholars, and commenting on current policy debates. Abraham does an excellent job of explaining the maze of healthcare programs available to the urban poor. More importantly, he clearly identifies in human and policy terms how these same programs have failed a population desperately in need of help. Recommended for most collections. - Karen A. Wolin, Univ. of Illinois Coll. of Medicine at Chicago Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus sCool yet compassionate eyewitness report of an inner-city black family's struggle to cope with sickness and poverty. Abraham, expanding on articles she wrote for *The Chicago Reporter*, demonstrates brilliantly just how confusing and cumbersome our national health-care system has become. From May 1989 to April 1990, Abraham followed the (pseudonymous) Banes family as its head, Jackie, cared for her bedridden diabetic grandmother; her alcoholic, partially paralyzed father; her drug-abusing husband, on thrice-weekly dialysis following kidney failure; and three young children. The labyrinthine mysteries of Medicare and Medicaid are daunting even to the Yale-educated author, yet Jackie must make what sense of them she can in order to keep her family going. Still, services that might have protected the children's health or lightened the family's burdens often aren't taken advantage of thanks to confusion about how the system works, lack of information, and the overwhelming job of simply surviving from one day to the next. Abraham concentrates on two stories--that of Jackie's grandmother, whose condition worsens, requiring hospitalization, then nursing-home care; and that of Jackie's husband, who receives a second kidney transplant. Both stories raise the issue of rationing: Could the \$120,000 spent on the final months of the grandmother's life have been better utilized? How should recipients be selected for scarce organs? Abraham's depiction of the Baneses' plight reveals serious flaws in our health-care system, but the more basic problem is seen to be the devastating social illness of our inner cities, an illness no national health plan can cure. Abraham doesn't pretend to have the answers--but she illuminates the problems with passion and skill. -- Copyright copy;1993, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.