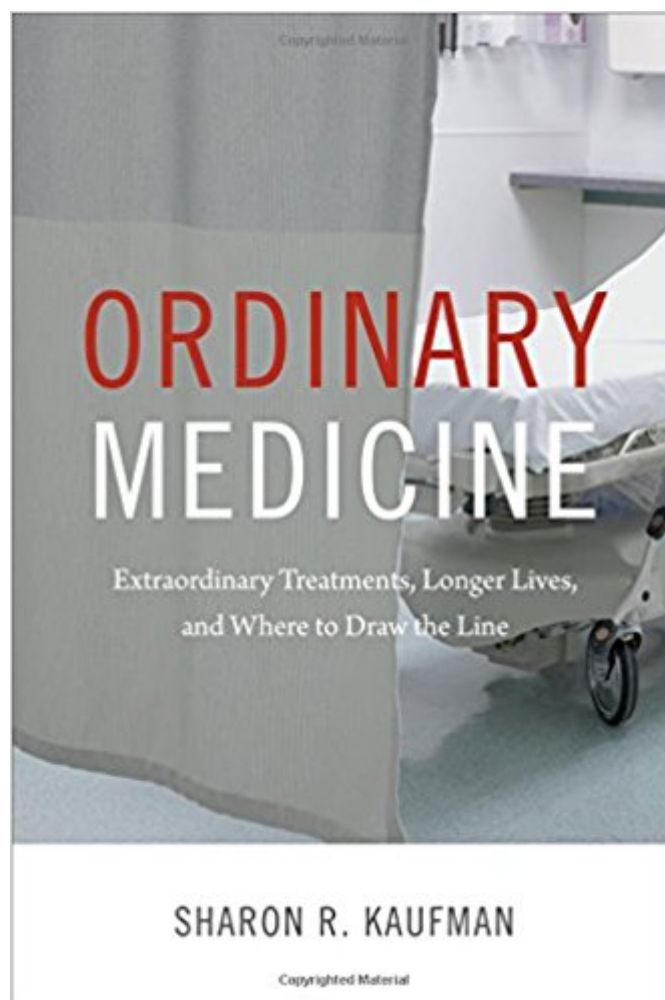




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# Ordinary Medicine: Extraordinary Treatments, Longer Lives, And Where To Draw The Line (Critical Global Health: Evidence, Efficacy, Ethnography)





## Synopsis

Most of us want and expect medicine's miracles to extend our lives. In today's aging society, however, the line between life-giving therapies and too much treatment is hard to see—it's being obscured by a perfect storm created by the pharmaceutical and biomedical industries, along with insurance companies. In *Ordinary Medicine* Sharon R. Kaufman investigates what drives that storm's "more is better" approach to medicine: a nearly invisible chain of social, economic, and bureaucratic forces that has made once-extraordinary treatments seem ordinary, necessary, and desirable. Since 2002 Kaufman has listened to hundreds of older patients, their physicians and family members express their hopes, fears, and reasoning as they faced the line between enough and too much intervention. Their stories anchor *Ordinary Medicine*. Today's medicine, Kaufman contends, shapes nearly every American's experience of growing older, and ultimately medicine is undermining its own ability to function as a social good. Kaufman's careful mapping of the sources of our health care dilemmas should make it far easier to rethink and renew medicine's goals.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Sharon R. Kaufman has made an important and disturbing discovery about the links between for-profit healthcare companies, so-called evidence-based medicine, doctors, and patients. *Ordinary Medicine* should be read, thought about, and acted upon by those who have the power to effect change." (Victoria Sweet, author of *God's Hotel: A Doctor, a Hospital, and a Pilgrimage to the*

Heart of Medicine)"I devoured Ordinary Medicine. It gave me courage. It helped me delineate, sometimes for the first time, the interlocking forces and practices that have helped create an epidemic of unnecessary suffering at the end of life. Breathtaking in its scope, rigor, and intellectual range, this book will help readers take back control of their lives and deaths from the forces that have created an 'ordinary' end-of-life medicine that is far from ordinary." (Katy Butler, author of Knocking on Heaven's Door: The Path to a Better Way of Death)"Ordinary Medicine is an exploration of how what is essentially experimental medicine can become 'standard care.' In this thoroughly researched book, many of our assumptions are shaken. The system that is extant would seem aligned to prevent us from accepting death as a natural life progression and offering in its place prolonged suffering. A truly engaging and provocative read." (Abraham Verghese, author of Cutting for Stone)"The recommendation by the AMA to Medicare to begin paying physicians for discussions with patients about end-of-life care makes this new book by Sharon Kaufman particularly timely. She explains why the present health care system is biased toward excess treatment at the end of life, and advocates a broad approach to health care reforms that goes beyond cost control to encompass social and ethical considerations." (Victor R. Fuchs, author of How We Live)"Medical anthropologist Kaufman bravely delves into the heartbreaking predicament of modern medicine: getting the medicine we wish for but then having to live with the unsettling and far-ranging consequences. Kaufman is at her best when focusing on the heartbreaking dilemma of patients dealing with the consequences of ordinary medicine, such as an elderly patient who must choose between lifesaving treatments or palliative care, facing repeated hospital visits regardless of the choice. Kaufman calls for no less than making the ethics of medicine the preeminent topic of our national conversation about health care reform." (Publishers Weekly)"What makes Kaufman's analysis distinctive is the way she demonstrates the effects of Medicare policy on treatment benefits—namely, if a patient on Medicare is eligible for treatment, providers are often willing to supply it. But the author notes that this way of thinking has led us to stop examining issues around quality of life, obligations to our families, and the inevitable prospect that we will die. Health-care professionals, students of medical ethics, and others interested in the actions that frame American medicine will find this a thought-provoking read." (Aaron Klink Library Journal (Starred Review) 2014-05-01)"If Gawande is the voice of comfort, and simple yet vital solutions, Sharon Kaufman brings her characteristic analytic and ethical precision, eschewing easy answers for an assessment of the structural density of our current predicament. Anyone who has read her earlier book on end-of-life care in American hospitals, *And a Time to Die*:

How American Hospitals Shape the End of Life, will be familiar with her tremendous ability to narrate the ambiguities of American medicine as it unfolds on the ground via the stories of people who are caught up in its contradictions. (Julie Livingston Public Books 2015-06-02)"The elegant part of Kaufman's analysis of a kind maybe only a sharp-eyed anthropologist with a wide lens can provide concerns the way we all become unwitting victims of the chain, wrapped tightly around us.... Is there any good news here? Yes, Sharon Kaufman has written a wonderful, necessary, and readable book, and that is a start." (Daniel Callahan Hastings Center Report 2016-04-01)"This provocative, engrossing book will make a valuable addition to undergraduate and graduate courses in anthropology, sociology, public health, and public policy, including those in medical anthropology and sociology, science and technology studies, bioethics, the nature of U.S. health care, aging and dying, and visions of personhood and the life course. Beyond the classroom, the book should also be read by physicians, health care policymakers, medical ethicists, and an educated public wishing to rethink and renew medicine's goals." (Sarah Lamb Medical Anthropology Quarterly 2015-11-01)"Fascinating.... The book is written in a lucid and highly readable style, case studies of patients bringing the health care system vividly alive through thick description.... The ethical dilemmas, small and large simultaneously, gripped me such that on two consecutive readings I found myself sitting up late into the night unable to put it down." (Susan Pickard Social History of Medicine 2016-05-07)"Kaufman delivers a haunting and provocative meditation on the peculiarly American obsession with highly technologized longevity. Through a combination of historical analyses of debates in health policy and health economics, bioethical argumentation, and powerful ethnographic examples, Kaufman meticulously demonstrates the rise over the past few decades of what she calls ordinary medicine.... Kaufman's book constitutes an important and troubling addition to current bioethical debates on health financing and the distribution of medical resources. At its heart, this book seems to be about how and why US health care costs have spiraled out of control a topic of great timeliness and political interest." (Katherine A. Mason American Ethnologist 2016-05-01)"A must read for all practitioners and people experiencing the end of life.... Kaufman does a good job discussing the four outside issues that impact medicine today: the biomedical research industry, which pours out expensive new treatments; the determination of what treatments will be ordered according to what insurance or Medicare will reimburse for; evidence supporting a treatment's use, causing it to become standard care for all; and the ethical imperative that if something is standard, everyone should receive it. Kaufman also provides several scenarios and an extensive bibliography. This book should be required

reading for every health care provider. "Highly recommended. Upper-division undergraduates through professionals/practitioners" (S. C. Grossman Choice 2015-10-01)"The strengths of this revealing study derive from Kaufman's analysis of the chain of drivers that creates unprecedented growth in medical treatments; compelling evidence from case studies; multiple perspectives of physicians and other health care personnel, patients, and their families; and the questions raised about drawing the line. This book will create a deeper understanding of the expanding possibilities for medical treatments and the implications for the health care system." (Joanne McCloskey Journal of Anthropological Research 2017-01-31)"[T]his is a book whose moral passion is palpable, and admirable for just that reason, as well as for its excellent scholarship. Yet, it is Kaufman's careful, insightful observations that carry us beyond her undeniably excellent analysis." (David Schenck Society 2017-02-28)"Overall, Kaufman's latest book is moving to read and sets out the dilemmas of aging and dying within the American healthcare system.... I would recommend that anthropologists and healthcare professionals read her book to reflect on the healthcare practices they are part of and observe." (Erica Borgstrom Anthropology and Medicine 2016-08-22)

Sharon R. Kaufman is Chair of the Department of Anthropology, History and Social Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco. She is the author of *And a Time to Die: How American Hospitals Shape the End of Life*.

Everyone should read this who is wondering what has happened to our health care system in the U.S. Offers amazing insights into mostly unrecognized forces at work which are driving up costs relentlessly, especially at end of life. Takes a look at how ongoing, sometimes futile treatments and interventions can prolong suffering for both patients and their families.... something no one seems willing to address. A difficult topic to write about, but Kaufman does it well done in a nonjudgmental way.

I found this book fascinating. As a physician I deeply appreciate the perspective, history and ethical evaluations this book provides to understand the forces that currently shape medicine in the US. I read the book with increasing interest. The author writes as a scholar, but the book is quite readable. She explains that "Ordinary Medicine" is beneath the radar and has been formed by the forces of funding/reimbursement--focusing on Medicare, an aging society and the shift from patriarchal medicine to "shared decision making" which often foists a huge burden upon patients.

Until I read this book, I had no idea that implantable defibrillators had become so ubiquitous in elderly patients and she describes a situation--a perfect storm--of unlimited Medicare funding for hospital based medicine, technological advances and clinical guidelines that encourage intervention. She evaluates the ethics and practice of transplant medicine where organs are allocated by time on the list and quite elderly patients receive organs from much younger donors. The system is in desperate need of change, and yet as she quoted a physician daughter of a terminally ill patient harshly responding "more is more" to a physician's attempt to palliate. Americans are terrified of rationing and lack of access to treatment in healthcare, but this book shows how so much of the "evidence based" decisions are often based on reimbursement, market forces and unexamined ethical quandaries. And conflicts of interest abound. Most of us in medicine need perspective and we're often in the trenches and unable to take this long view. This book provides much needed clarification and exploration of the unseen forces behind "Ordinary Medicine"

Sharon Kaufman manages to take the huge, complicated and largely unseen forces that run the American healthcare system and unveil the curtain that seems to hide the workings of health care institutions, workers and patients. She sets the stage in her introduction, noting the social, cultural and economic factors that have brought the U.S. to this point where what used to be cutting edge and extraordinary into standard of care and ordinary. But the economic factors remain the most formidable obstacle for patient access to treatment. This is highlighted by the increasing age of the American population with medical care enabling people to live longer, but not always better. Physicians seeking the patient's best interest is often countered by well meaning family members and patients demanding--and expecting-- the once "extraordinary" medical measures to keep going. Kaufman shows how the medical technology, supporting economy and public expectations spin into questions we dread asking, much less answering; in terms of life and medicine, how far is too far? How is human life valued by extending life without attention to quality of life? While the U.S. seems to have the best of everything to offer in medical treatments, living ever longer does not mean living better. This book will rattle your assumptions if you're a baby boomer and set to enter Medicare (if you're not there already) and ask some serious questions about how you want to live and die in America.

A must read for everybody. Written with clarity and knowledge this book is an eye opener to the ethical challenges presented by modern medicine.

Everyone should read this book to understand how the health care system promotes treatments that may or may not be efficacious or desired.

Dense, hard to read, poorly structured, convoluted language that fails to make the point that it claims. Definitely not what I expected

Truly remarkable book.

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