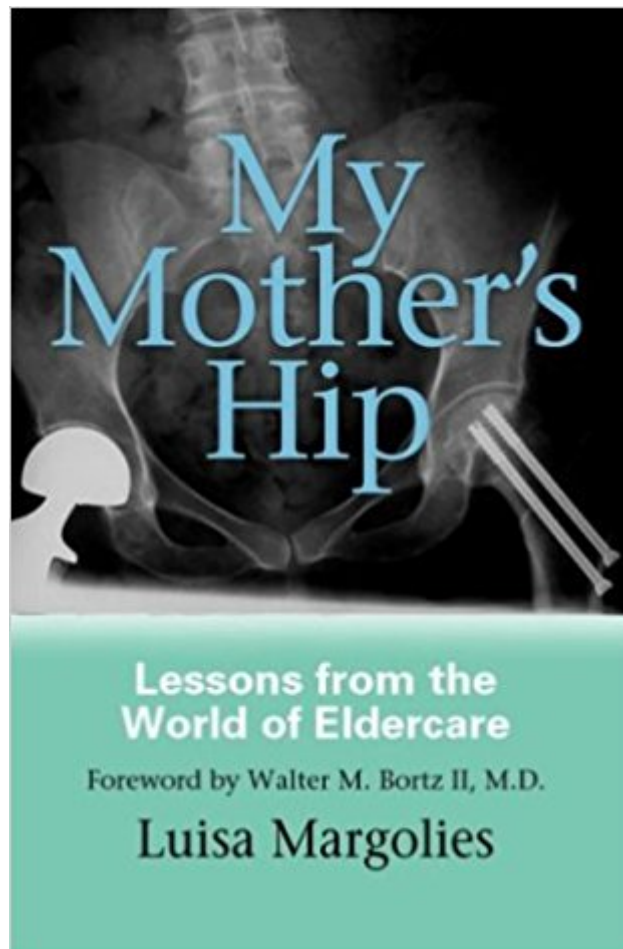




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My Mother's Hip: Lessons From The World Of Eldercare



Synopsis

Some 400,000 hip fractures occur every year, the vast majority among the elderly; all too often these fractures are associated with death or severe disability. After her mother's double hip fracture, Luisa Margolies immersed herself in identifying and coordinating the services and professionals needed to provide critical care for an elderly person. She soon realized that the American medical system is ill prepared to deal with the long-term care needs of our graying society. The heart of "My Mother's Hip" is taken up with the author's day-to-day observations as her mother's condition worsened, then improved only to worsen again, while her father became increasingly anxious and disoriented. As both a devoted daughter and a skilled anthropologist, Margolies vividly renders her interactions with physicians, nurses, hospital workers, nursing home administrators, the Medicare bureaucracy, home care providers, and her parents. In the Lessons chapter that follows each episode, she discusses in a broader context the weighty decisions that adult children must make on their parents' behalf and the emotional toll their responsibility takes. Here she addresses the complex practical issues that commonly arise in such situations: understanding the consequences of hip fracture and its treatment, preparing health care proxies and advanced directives, enabling elders to remain at home, and the heartbreaking dilemma of prolonging life. Like many adult children, Margolies learned her lessons about eldercare in the midst of crises. This book is intended to ease the information-gathering and decision-making processes for others involved in eldercare. Luisa Margolies is Clinical Research Director of the Hip Fracture Research Project of South Florida; she serves as a consultant on aging-in-place as well as housing, assistive technology, and universal design for the elderly. She also is Director of Ediciones Venezolanas de Antropologia in Caracas, Venezuela.

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Customer Reviews

"I would love to use [this] book with a class of gerontology and public policy students to launch a discussion of what a better care system would entail and how we might harness caregiver anger to achieve it. I'd also like to see narratives like this in lots of adult discussion groups in churches and synagogues, so family caregivers to those with serious and eventually fatal chronic illness start their work better prepared." Medical Humanities Review "[T]his very readable book offers a unique view of the effect that illness has on the entire fabric of a patient's life. It will be of interest to both physicians and non-physicians involved in elder care, as well as to the elders themselves." The New England Journal of Medicine "the book reads like a novel, [and] is very skilfully written." The Senior Times "In My Mother's Hip, Luisa Margolies has written two powerful books in one. The chapters of her caregiving experience read like a novel, one that more and more Americans are living every day. Her alternating chapters, called 'Lessons,' build a compelling argument for fixing--and humanizing--the fragmented system of long-term care in the United States. Every older American, family caregiver, and provider of health and social services should read this remarkable book."

--Gloria Cavanaugh, President and CEO, American Society on Aging "In My Mother's Hip, Luisa Margolies seamlessly integrates medical information with an intensely personal story that includes the frustration and fear that result from caring--and not always knowing how to care--for people you love. She explores end-of-life issues with the certainty of one who's been there. She knows how elusive the right answers can be and in their absence, how necessary are the qualities of patience, love, and understanding." --Nick Taylor, author of A Necessary End "My Mother's Hip should be mandatory reading for all those who treat hip fracture patients as well as for the families of the patients. Luisa Margolies has captured the true impact of a hip fracture--on the patient, their family, and on our society." --Joseph D. Zuckerman, M.D., Professor and Chairman, NYU-Hospital for Joint Diseases, Department of Orthopaedic Surgery "My Mother's Hip is a splendid and troubling book. Two of the great problems that come from medical progress are the use of technologies that can be less than perfect and the care of the chronically ill elderly by their children. This book is a wonderful exploration of what it means to be a dutiful daughter and a troubled surrogate decision-maker. Luisa Margolies' skills as an anthropologist bring those dilemmas to life in a compelling and readable fashion." --Daniel Callahan, Director, International Program, The Hastings Center

What most of us don't know about the longevity revolution --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Great book for elder care

Too much whining, self-aggrandizement, naivety, and obviously capitalized on her parents' medical conditions by writing a book.

Luise writes from her heart and that's why this story is so compelling. Luise chronicles her experience caring for her elderly parents. She alternates with factual chapters about nursing homes, medical care for the elderly and other elder care information. I spent a few years caring for my elderly father so this book really resonated for me. Her honest depiction of the emotional, physical and financial impacts of caring for elderly parents brought me to tears at times. Sibling dynamics add to the stress and Luise talks about these without judgment. At first, I wasn't sure that I liked the factual chapters mixed in with the story, but in the end, it really added to the book. This book is important reading for anyone caring for elderly relatives. We can learn from Luise's experience and also know what to expect with our own relatives. It helps to know there are other people who have gone through the same thing.

The author's mother breaks two hips and after doing initially well, worsens after rehab, returns to a hospital, and has her heart stop. She is revived to be on a respirator. Because the doctor guesses her mother is not terminally ill, the author chooses to disregard her living will: "I knowingly went against Mother's living will. I wanted Mother to live." During the ensuing, horrible months, her mother repeatedly says she wishes she had been allowed to die. Her daughter strives valiantly to care for her despite an uncaring brother, a confused father with Alzheimer's, and difficult circumstances, but things go from bad to worse. Still, her daughter elects not to share her mother's living will with some of the ensuing institutions she stays in. After the middle of the book, I had to skim because it was so dreadful. But eventually, after another crisis, she finally agrees to let her mother be removed from a respirator and she dies. "My conversation with Dr. Dawson was not an easy one and could have come about only after many months of watching Mother's decline and being involved in her fruitless efforts to recover." How much better off her mother would have been, if only the author been able to bring herself to abide by her mother's living will in the first place! (Would it have been better for the

author and her father? It would have been terrible. But what transpired was also terrible.) Still, as far as I can tell, the author does not regret her earlier decisions. Instead, she pours over the medical record and concludes that "despite the odds, the outcome could have been different." Luisa Margolies is right in that (as is typical) her mother got a lot of AWFUL care despite her daughter's valiant efforts to avoid that, and yes, with better care she'd likely have done better. Yes, these things can and should be improved and can and should be better. But there are lessons here to be learned too about the consequences of disregarding the expressed wishes of a person NOT to receive such aggressive emergency interventions, and Luisa Margolies has NOT learned them.

I stumbled across this book in my local library, while searching for sources of information and guidance as I entered the caregiving relationship with my mother. While our circumstances are somewhat different than the author's, I found this book to be a helpful balance of personal narrative and issue identification and clarification. The scholarly background brings some heft to this very tender story. I bought two copies, one for my brother and one for my caregiver's support group.

As the population ages hip fractures are becoming more prevalent. This is a must read for anyone caring for a loved one who's suffered a hip fracture. As an orthopedic surgeon I'm recommending this book to my patients.

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