

Proposal

Bernhard Albrecht
DOCTORS

People without hope

Doctors pushing themselves to their limits

Milestones in modern medicine



BERNHARD ALBRECHT

PATIENT
MEINES
LEBENS

Von Ärzten, die alles wagen



DROEMER 

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Overview

What do you do, when you've done everything that can be done and your patient is still dying? Do you give up? Or do you keep fighting?

See what happens when deeply committed doctors face their cases of a lifetime ...

- Nine incredible cases of doctors and patients who chose to fight and broke new grounds in the world of science
- An award-winning author, science journalist and doctor who knows his subject to the core
- As thrilling to read as a crime novel, beautifully written like literature



DOCTORS
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The Author:

Grimme prize winner Bernhard Albrecht, Science journalist and doctor

Bernhard Albrecht studied medicine and journalism in Bochum, Uppsala, Barcelona and Strasburg. While working as a doctor, he started writing articles for newspapers and magazines as a sideline. In 2000 he started worked as a journalist full time for different TV stations and magazines, such as DER SPIEGEL and GEO. He is science editor for STERN and lives in Munich and Hamburg.



Albrecht has received numerous distinctions for his work, such as:

- Adolf-Grimme-Preis 2010 (the “German TV-Oscar”)
- International TV award Rose d’Or
- ERM Media Price for Sustainable Development 2012
- German Journalist Price Neurology 2012
- Best Cancer Reporter Award 2012

Chapter Outline

Breathing

When his marriage to a 25-year-old German woman falls to pieces, the homeless Indian Pavninder Singh tries to end his life by swallowing oven cleaner. He survives – but his trachea is damaged beyond repair. He will have to spend the rest of his life attached to a ventilator. A married couple, both scientists, attempt to make him an artificial trachea in the laboratory. It is the first experiment of its kind worldwide.

21 weeks, five days

At 21 weeks and five days' pregnant with twins, a young woman's waters break. Because the doctors do not know of any case where such premature babies have survived, they do not intend to try and save the children. But the couple has fought for years for this pregnancy and neither wants to give up. A paediatrician takes up the challenge. He tries everything to help the youngest premature babies ever survive.

Pain

She has had cancer of the abdomen twice, several operations and radiation therapy. After this, the patient is criss-crossed with scars and suffers from serious pain syndrome that doctors are unable to cure for 14 years. An experienced pain therapist tries everything that conventional Western medicine has to offer, for three whole months. Then he has one last idea – and this will be one that not only changes the life of his patient but also his own.

New feet

When the boy is two years old, his feet begin to deform. His mother runs from one doctor to another: here, the diagnosis is “protracted polio”, there, it is “spasticity of unknown origin”. There is no cure. The boy grows into a man, and when he's forty years old, he can only hobble a few hundred metres. Then he finally comes across the man they call Dr Foot, one of the best foot surgeons in the world, who has treated sheiks and multi-millionaires.

Epilepsy

The young woman was always wilful but highly intelligent. After an epileptic fit, however, she is never quite the same. She starts seeing bugs climbing the walls, and bites the nurses and her carer before falling into a coma. She becomes a long-term invalid. No one knows what she is suffering from. After four years, she is seen by a young neurologist at the Charité Berlin. He finds signs of a new type of nervous disorder that might well unhinge the system of diagnosis in psychiatry and neurology, and put into question current valid knowledge.

17 degrees

A snowy New Year's Eve, spent together with your best friends in a mountain hut. What could be nicer? But when one of them sets off for home alone the next morning, with a high level of alcohol still in his bloodstream, he gets lost in the snow. When an emergency doctor finds him, his body temperature has sunk to 17 degrees Celsius. The doctor knows that the heart stops beating at 28 degrees Celsius. He's never heard or read of a person being revived in such a severe state of hypothermia. Is the young man already dead? Should the doctor reanimate him – or will he be resuscitating a zombie?

The pariah

Her mother is dead, her father has run off and no one wants to take in the little girl in the Turkish village. The aunt foists her onto her grandmother, who puts her in a home. In the bathroom mirror, the girl discovers a red mark on her forehead. Two years later, half of her face has been eaten away and the dermatologists at the Turkish University Hospital are clueless. Her aunt brings her to Germany. The oral-maxillofacial surgeon at the University Hospital in Düsseldorf wants to operate straight away – but before he knows the cause, it makes no sense. A race against time begins.

Gut instinct

The surgeon has promised his young colon cancer patient that he will do everything he can so that her children can keep their mother for as long as possible. But soon, the woman only has a life expectancy of half a year. He considers what he would do in her situation. Maximum risk! And he decides on a radical operation that no doctor in the world had ever attempted in such a way before. Only today, twenty years later, an in-depth study has proved that he was right.

Fame

When the lowly ward doctor at Berlin's Charité has the idea of a lifetime, he immediately fears that someone will take it away. If he is proven right, he could be the first doctor to cure a person of the autoimmune disease Aids. His patient, an American, is suffering from leukaemia and is HIV positive. The constellation is unique as there is a choice of 232 potential bone marrow donors. It presents the opportunity for a daring experiment. But the idea is so simple – anyone can come up with it ...