

Searching for the right doctor...

I recently read a fascinating novel, "The Unnamed" by Joshua Ferris. Reading the blurb on the book jacket did not prepare me for some of the passages in the book which reminded me very strongly of how hard it is to get help from the medical profession. Here is the first of a number of quotes that might strike a chord with anyone who has been on a long and often fruitless search for help.

"Before he got sick, he was under the illusion that he needed only to seek help from the medical community, and then all that ...ingenuity, all that researched enlightenment, would bring about his inalienable right to good health. At the very least, he thought, there would be one person, one expert in the field, to give him some degree of understanding, solace and action. But by now he had abandoned his search for the One Guy...He was sick of searching for the One Guy and sick of having his hopes dashed. He would not let himself believe in the One Guy anymore."

28/2/11 The Morass of Uncertainty

Further quotes from The Unnamed by Joshua Ferris

"The scans had revealed nothing. That was neither positive proof of mental illness nor the negative confirmation of a medical disease. It was more of the same, exactly what he feared- greater inconclusiveness, additional absence of evidence, the final barrier removed from boundless interpretation. He was anything anyone wanted him to be- a nutcase, a victim, a freak, a mystery"

I recall the words of one neurosurgeon who I saw years ago. Talking about my neck MRI scan, which was normal, he remarked "Well, that considerably lowers your credibility, doesn't it!" I can't post my mental response to that comment!

More from The Unnamed...

“He had told...the psychologist...that he would prefer the diagnosis of a fatal disease. [the psychologist] bluntly stated that he was being excessive and naïve. “No”, he said, “I’d rather have something I understand.””

Understanding what is going on is key to making it more manageable...and it can feel odd to be relieved to get a diagnosis of an incurable (maybe for some, even a fatal) illness, but sometimes certainty of any kind is better than floundering around in a morass of uncertainty and fear.

27/03/2011 The road to nowhere

The final quote from The Unnamed by Joshua Ferris:

“He had been forced to seek out the opinion of specialists, who sent him on to other specialists, who made him stand at the mercy of ever-more-refined specialists, who referred him to the specialists they most admired. Now a specialist was coming to him.

The executive director of a medical alliance was telling him once and for all what ailed him...it would not have mattered that he had never heard of it before. It would not have mattered if the science was debated, if the evidence was still outstanding, if the experts had been debunked.

He would have been instantly on the phone. He would have flown anywhere, stayed any length of time.”

In desperation, we can believe anything, do anything to make things better. But that can often lead down a dead-end road, or into a worse situation...