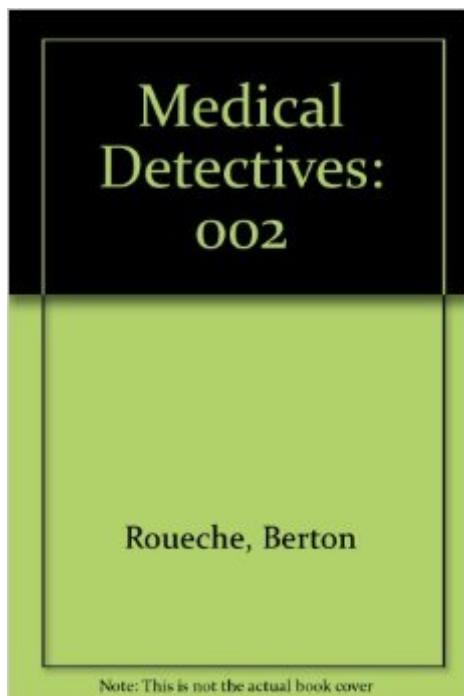


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# The Medical Detectives: Volume II



## Synopsis

Contains three fascinating tales of strange illnesses, rare diseases, poisons, and parasites--each tale a thriller of medical suspense by the incomparable Beron Roueche. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I brought a bunch of books home from my office and this was one of them. I had forgotten about it, and I have just read it again. Roueche was an excellent journalist writing for the New Yorker. He wrote about public health starting way back in 1944. This book is fascinating for several reasons. Not only is it a good explanation of what epidemiologists do for a living (the ones who don't deal with Level 4 viruses but the everyday disasters that still happen), but it is also a great history of public health in the U.S. Roueche was not a disaster monger. Rather he wrote about the men and women who literally had to hunt down clues about diseases, food-borne pathogens, stupid things parents did that led to the development of child safe medicine containers, etc. Some of these men and women put their lives on the line, and continue to do so when there are outbreaks of emerging diseases like Hantavirus in the Four Corners region, dealing with increasing cases of food poisoning, and now with the problems with prions (mad cow disease). He wrote in such a way to give us history and details that many other writers of health history often leave out. The information concerning the increasing amount of rabies being seen in the U.S. was news to me...I always thought it was native to this country, but apparently before the 1950's it was rarely seen. The

chapter on aspirin, gave wonderful historical background, and brought attention to the need to make children understand that any medicine, whether flavored or not, is not candy. This book is a good recommendation for students in med school, for those who are interested in public health, and I think for high school science students to see the practical application of what they learn. I am going to go look for more writings of his...they are too enjoyable to miss! Karen Sadler, Science Education, University of Pittsburgh

This book is a collection of articles, written by Berton Rouche and published in the *New Yorker*, about medical investigations that took place in the US from the 1940's to late 1980's. Though this book would obviously be interesting to medical students, you don't have to understand much about medicine to enjoy it. Most of the medical terms used are either defined or explained in context, and all facts relevant to the cases are clearly stated. Each case is presented as a mystery that unfolds as the investigators search for the cause of a patient's illness. First, we are given the basic facts of the case: the patient's condition and symptoms, his or her environment and activities at the time of the onset of illness, and the investigator/doctor's initial diagnosis or impressions. Next, we are shown how an investigator makes discoveries leading to a diagnosis and treatment. Finally, we follow the health officials as they track the source of the epidemic. Though I have no connection to the medical field, I found these articles very interesting, and I think I've learned a lot from them. However, I wish someone could have added a post-script to each of the articles with an update on some of the information. For example, one of the articles (written in 1944) said that 2% of American pigs were carriers of trichinosis. I would like to know what the statistics are now. Besides that minor complaint, I loved the book and would recommend it to any curious reader who loves to learn about new things.

Berton Roueché wrote for the "New Yorker" magazine for almost half a century, and was winner of the 1950 Albert Lasker Medical Journalism Award. His many volumes on physicians and medical detectives, including this book, were collected from his articles in the "New Yorker." "The Medical Detectives" volume II is great bedtime reading, because the good guys, i.e. physicians and epidemiologists always get their villain (whether it's a germ, poison gas, or a disgruntled boyfriend). Volume II's twenty-three case histories date from 1947 to 1984, before the days when Big Insurance dictated how long patients would stay in hospitals and what kind of treatment they would receive. Some of the doctors in this book actually made house calls! A couple of the cases really stayed with me, because the patients were kept in the hospital for weeks at a time just to track down a

diagnosis. In one case, a man had the hiccups. In the other, a woman had a headache. Can you guess what would happen to these patients if they went to an emergency room, today? Anyone who is interested in medical detection will be both engrossed and instructed by Roueché's careful, detailed true-life mysteries. The cases contained in this volume range from the man who hiccupped for 27 years through the deliberate poisoning of a family. One of my favorites from 1948 is called, "The Fog". This does not refer to John Carpenter's famous 1980 horror movie, but a true story that is in some ways even more frightening than anything Hollywood could produce. It takes place in Donora, Pennsylvania, a gritty mill town along the Monongahela River, which is infamous for its fogs: "They are greasy, gagging fogs, often intact even at high noon, and they sometimes last for two or three days." The Donora 'Death Fog' killed 20 people and left hundreds injured and gasping for breath. Roueché tells this story of America's worst air pollution disaster through the observations of eye-witnesses, one of them a physician. London usually comes to mind when Death comes stalking through a thick fog, but this story is every bit as atmospheric as one by A. Conan Doyle, and "The Fog's" detectives are real people. This collection of true medical stories starts off a bit slowly, but you will end up wishing for Volume III.

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