

Zoobiquity: bringing together human and animal medicine

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Natterson-Horowitz, B., & Bowers, K. (2012). *Zoobiquity: what animals can teach us about health and the science of healing*. New York: Random House Inc.

Beluga whales with breast cancer? Flamingos with heart attacks? Obese dragon flies? There has always been a divide between human and veterinary medicine. Many people do not like to think of humans as animals, but common ancestors between humans and other animals can often explain why humans have many of the same medical conditions as various animals. *Zoobiquity: What Animals can Teach us About Health and the Science of Healing* by Barbara Natterson-Horowitz and Kathryn Bowers (2012) looks at the overlap between human medicine, veterinary medicine, and evolutionary biology. Natterson-Horowitz has been a cardiologist for over twenty years at the UCLA Medical Center and is also currently a cardiac consultant and the Los Angeles Zoo. Through her experience at the zoo, Natterson-Horowitz began to see similarities between human and animal cardiac problems and subsequently questioned if animals and humans shared other medical conditions. Do animals have eating-disorders? Do animals have sexually-transmitted diseases? This led her to investigate more on these topics and to write a book with Bowers addressing the medical conditions that humans and animals share.

The book also explores ailments seen in elephants, dogs, koalas, and tamarinds, and documents their relations to the same ailments in humans. Natterson-Horowitz and Bowers provide interesting and relevant examples of medical conditions that are common in humans but that are also seen in animals such as obesity in dogs, koalas with chlamydia, and eating disorders in pigs. Each chapter has a different focus and explores various animals in which the disease or disorder is seen. One chapter focuses on the origins of self-injury in both animals and humans. Natterson-Horowitz explores everything from birds plucking feathers from their own skin, cats which obsessively lick sections of their body causing irritation, to humans who seek relief by cutting their own skin. Natterson-Horowitz focused on human adolescents who cut themselves to seek relief by a release of endorphins. She found that many of these adolescents had disorders such as bulimia nervosa and obsessive-compulsive disorder but it is unknown what triggers the adolescents to start this behavior. This same self-injury is seen in many animals such as certain breeds of dogs, which obsessively lick at their body, turtles, and snakes who chew their feet or tails, and horses who violently bite at their own body. She proposed that by working together, veterinarians and doctors might be able to find relief for animals and humans.

Natterson-Horowitz focuses on specific cases that capture the attention of the reader and can be related to common disorders seen in a typical reader's life. The book is easy to read, but hard to put down.

Zoobiquity: What Animals can Teach us About Health and the Science of Healing shows that

diseases are seen across many species and that the findings are not just flukes. It serves as an investigation of how similarities in humans and animals can be used to create medical treatment that is relevant to all species. This book is a must read for any one with pets or anyone who is interested in human or veterinary medicine. It focuses on the importance of the bigger picture when it comes to medicine. It presents the idea the human doctors and veterinarians should work together to help solve medical mysteries.

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