



The Lassa Ward: One Man's Fight Against One of the World's Deadliest Diseases

By Ross Donaldson

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Ross Donaldson was an idealistic young medical student who gave up his comfortable life in the States to venture into Sierra Leone, a country ravaged by fighting and plagued by conflict streaming across the border from neighboring Liberia. In a hospital ward with meager supplies, Ross is in a race against time to find a way to care for patients afflicted with Lassa fever, a deadly and highly contagious hemorrhagic illness similar to Ebola. Forced to confront his own fears, he stands alone to make life-and-death decisions in the face of a never-ending onslaught of the sick. Ultimately, he finds himself not only fighting for the lives of others but also for his own. *The Lassa Ward* is the memoir of a young man studying to be a physician, while making his way through a land where a battle against one of the world's deadliest diseases matches a struggle for human rights and decency.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Donaldson is a medical cowboy, chasing viruses in Africa, but also a UCLA medical prof and ER doc. This book is a wild and extraordinary memoir of his 2003 summer in Sierra Leone as a naïve medical student studying Lassa fever (a close cousin of the Ebola virus). Donaldson gives passionate and powerful reportage on a struggling clinic treating villagers and refugees from neighboring war-torn Liberia suffering from the devastating and often fatal illness. What inspired the adventure was the work of Dr. Aniru Conteh (who died in 2004), the hero at the heart of the story, whose Lassa ward served thousands. despite the lack of equipment, medicine and staff. For a week, Donaldson, untried and unsure, was left to treat the desperately ill patients alone—a test that turned a frightened student into a caring, if not altogether confident, young doctor. Despite a slow start, this astounding story of the seemingly insurmountable barriers to public health in a Third World country revs up into an irresistible tale of discovery, courage and kindness. (May)

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Review

“Effortlessly transmits both the facts and the fascination of a bad infectious outbreak...[a] portrait of contagion at the highest possible magnification.” *?The New York Times*

“A touching and compelling account. *The Lassa Ward* brings to life the challenges and rewards that dedicated development workers face daily around the world.” *?Joseph E. Stiglitz, 2001 Nobel laureate in economics*

“Required reading for all medical students and anyone looking for a little armchair medical adventure.” *?Library Journal*

“Donaldson started out as an earnest, well-meaning American medical student, off on a great African adventure. He came of age in the middle of a raging epidemic, civil war, and hideous poverty, discovering a humanity few Americans ever experience. Donaldson has bared his soul, offering a lesson that should be required reading for every doctor-in-training.” *?Laurie Garrett, Pulitzer Prize winner and author of Betrayal of Trust: The Collapse of Global Public Health*

“A potent mix of travel memoir, coming-of-age narrative and medical mystery. Donaldson's experiences treating a frighteningly infectious and often deadly hemorrhagic fever, the strength of his West African patients, and his own grave illness bring him to a contemplation of mortality, poverty, civil war, and medicine as it is practiced in the first and third worlds.” *?Jo Perry, BookBrowse.com*

About the Author

DR. ROSS I. DONALDSON is a UCLA medical professor who works in one of Los Angeles's main trauma centers, specializing in emergency medicine and global health. He is author of several medical texts and has been a humanitarian in some of the world's most dangerous places. When in the States, he resides in Venice Beach, California.

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