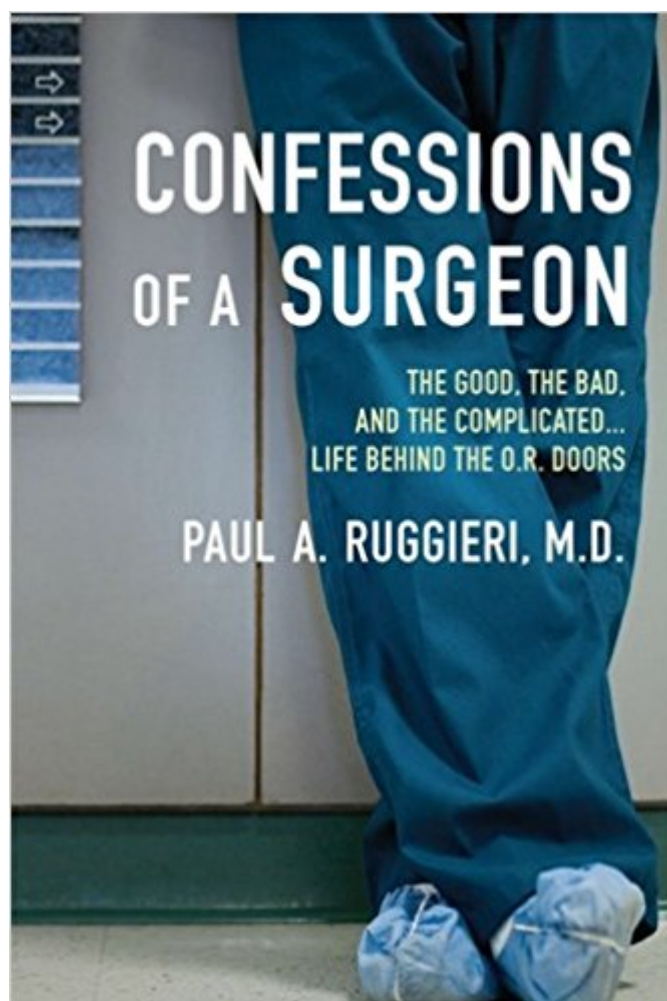


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# Confessions Of A Surgeon: The Good, The Bad, And The Complicated...Life Behind The O.R. Doors



## Synopsis

As an active surgeon and former department chairman, Dr. Paul A. Ruggieri has seen the good, the bad, and the ugly of his profession. In *Confessions of a Surgeon*, he pushes open the doors of the O.R. and reveals the inscrutable place where lives are improved, saved, and sometimes lost. He shares the successes, failures, remarkable advances, and camaraderie that make it exciting. He uncovers the truth about the abusive, exhaustive training and the arduous devotion of his old-school education. He explores the twenty-four-hour challenges that come from patients and their loved ones; the ethics of saving the lives of repugnant criminals; the hot-button issues of healthcare, lawsuits, and reimbursements; and the true cost of running a private practice. And he explains the influence of the "white coat code of silence" and why patients may never know what really transpires during surgery. Ultimately, Dr. Ruggieri lays bare an occupation that to most is as mysterious and unfamiliar as it is misunderstood. His account is passionate, illuminating, and often shocking-an eye-opening, never-before-seen look at real life, and death, in the O.R.

## Book Information

Paperback: 272 pages

Publisher: Berkley; 1 edition (January 3, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0425245152

ISBN-13: 978-0425245156

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 0.7 x 8.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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Best Sellers Rank: #60,595 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #3 in [Books > Medical Books > Medicine > Surgery > Trauma](#) #41 in [Books > Textbooks > Medicine & Health Sciences > Medicine > Clinical > Emergency Medicine](#) #46 in [Books > Textbooks > Medicine & Health Sciences > Medicine > Clinical > Surgery > General](#)

## Customer Reviews

Surgeons are full of courage. To cut into another human being, slicing through the living, bleeding skin, exposing the interior organs, removing, rearranging or remodeling them, requires outrageous conceit. An elective surgery, performed on a patient who is healthy, who freely requests such injury in pursuit of a greater good, is daring enough. But surgeons are often confronted with a desperate person, one who teeters on the brink of death, desiring only life. Surgery in such circumstances may

save them, or it may hasten their departure to the land from which none return. The final arbiter of that hasty decision may be a judge and jury, and the final disposition financial and social ruin for the intrepid doctor. Who would choose such a job in a time of shrinking pay and waxing quality reviews? Fortunately for all of us, there are plenty of individuals who would. The old axiom that surgeons are born, not made, holds true. Regardless of the rewards or penalties exacted upon their persons, surgeons can be nothing else but surgeons. So they tell us. And Dr. Ruggieri tells us plenty. In *Confessions of a Surgeon*, we read about his emotions, his late night thoughts, his shortcomings and misgivings, his resentments towards his patients, in short, his all too human traits. He writes about his mistakes, how they affect him, and how they affect his patients. Most patients don't like to think of their surgeon as a human being, but surgeons have all the limitations that the human condition entails. *Star Trek Voyager* may have the perfectly unflappable android doc, but you and I were born too soon for that. Some readers want the unvarnished truth, and here they will get it. If you prefer your surgeons on a pedestal, don't read this book. Dr. Ruggieri is not a professional writer, and *Confessions* is more like a conversation than a polished narrative. There are clichés, repetitions, and meandering paragraphs, but it does not detract from the story. This is highly readable, informative and entertaining. He allows you to walk into surgery with him, belly up to the table, and get your hands bloody. If you really want to know what happens in an operating room, or what a surgeon thinks about while you complain about your belly ache, it is all here in living color. I am an anesthesiologist, so I spend my days and nights working with surgeons, helping them, accepting their help, joking with them, and fighting with them. I have made a close study of the surgical personality, and Dr. Ruggieri is an outstanding specimen. He writes about the enormous complexities of human physiology, yet he is compelled to fast decisions and faster action. He writes about being humbled by his profession, and in the next paragraph he compares surgeons to gods. That is the mind of a surgeon. When he says humble, he means as humble as a god can be. I'm having some fun here, but considering what they do every day, you have to give them enormous respect. You have to respect his writing too. This book is a winner.

I originally bought this book in the Kindle version but then wanted to give it as a gift to a doctor friend so I bought this hard-cover version for him. The author, a successful surgeon, is remarkably forthright in his descriptions of the life of a surgeon, covering his days in medical school to his early practice and later as a more experienced and respected practitioner. It is his openness about his mistakes that makes the book so interesting. I certainly admire him. He is not happy with the way the practice of medicine is moving today and spends a lot of time refuting it. That part can seem a

bit preachy but the book is well worth it.

Prompted by a review in the WSJ by the author, Dr. Paul Ruggieri, I purchased this book via .com. It was well worth the effort as the book presents a very honest, concerned surgeon responding to the stresses of challenging and medically fragile patients, exhaustion, threat of lawsuits, and the overwhelming number of regulations hovering over his shoulders in the OR. The WSJ review was printed before the book was available to the public. It generated a number of attacks against Dr. Ruggieri as the short review supported stereotypes of surgeons having temper tantrums, throwing instruments in the OR, and complaining of problems such as keeping the surgical field open in face of layers of fat in a 330 pound patient. These critics should read the whole book before throwing righteous barbs. There is much humor, some of it dark, in the book. The information is true and written by a real doctor in the front lines of medicine and not by a non-medical scriptwriter or journalist. His last chapter, WILL YOUR SURGEON BE THERE?, is a must read and could easily be changed to: WILL YOUR PHYSICIAN BE THERE? Physicians are now starting to retire at younger ages; not as many talented college graduates are applying to medical school; medicine has become a business and not a calling or profession; easier subspecialties with better work hours, more income, pleasant lifestyle, and time to sleep are causing a troublesome shortage of physicians in general surgery and primary care (internal medicine, pediatrics, and primary care.) Dr. Ruggieri tells the truth in this highly readable and remarkable book. Surgery is a contact sport with life and death outcomes.

Well-written, easy to read book on the surgical profession past and present. Eye-opening insights to the good, bad and ugly aspects of the profession. The doc-writer brings to the fore the intersection of old-school "feel" of a surgeon and today's world of intense, regimented, diagnostic medicine. The author leaves no doubt and confirmed my own belief that a referral to a surgeon will put you on a path to a surgical procedure, with a second opinion only increasing your chances of going under the knife. The author did complain about the economics of the profession changing for the worse, but it wasn't over the top. He justly stated that the old school "business" is not what many surgeons bargained (my inference) and that the current direction of the regulatory framework governing hospitals and surgeons, would result in greater specialization, i.e. a surgeon that only performs surgery on thyroids or the colon. Great insights.

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