

MEDICINE READING LIST

With the help of some of our medical students, we've compiled a reading list of various books, podcasts, tv shows and social media accounts to help you find out more about what a career in medicine looks like and whether it's the right pathway for you. This is by no means an exhaustive list and you are not required to review all these suggestions. Choose instead what you are drawn to, or interested by, and remember to reflect on what you have gained from these pieces of literature and media.

The reviews are from some of our current medical students. Please note, the opinions expressed are their own and do represent the views of St Georges, University of London, as an institution.

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BOOKS

A Short History of Nearly Everything

by Bill Bryson (2003)

An exploration of history and science, from the Big Bang to our present-day civilisation, incorporating biology, chemistry and physics throughout.

Dear Life: A Doctor's Story of Love and Loss

By Rachel Clarke (2020)

Reflections of the experiences of a palliative care doctor, discussing how we face and deal with death.

The Appointment

By Graham Easton (2016)

Behind the scenes of GP appointments, the book follows a typical morning surgery exposing what really goes on during those brief and important ten minutes.

"It showed me just how much thought goes into even just a single appointment, how much doctors learn from their patients' experiences of conditions and also gave me insight into common pathologies which often arise in GP practices."

Bad Science

by Ben Goldacre (2008)

Each chapter explores a different aspect of science and dives deeper into unwrapping and interrogating it.

"A good read prior to medical school as this gave me an introduction to many interesting controversial topics in the medical world."

Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End

by Atul Gawande (2014)

Written by a practicing surgeon, Gawande explores ageing and dying and a good death. Juxtaposing quality of life versus sustaining life, it also explores the impact this has on doctors and the MDT.

"I believe Medicine is imperfect and Atul has beautifully captivated that from cover to cover. In his book, Atul has also shown us how good communication in itself can bring about much more healing than the use of fancy advancements of technology in medicine."

The Checklist Manifesto

by Atul Gawande (2011)

Explores surgery, surgical procedures, and the argument for using a checklist approach for prioritising patient safety.

“One of my favourite books I have read! A very insightful and interesting read into Medicine.”

Medical Ethics: A Very Short Introduction

by Tony Hope (2004)

A key topic for any medical student, this book provides a short overview of some key issues at the core of medicine.

“Really useful as it gave me an introduction to medical ethics which is a big part of the medical course at St George’s and gave me an idea of the topics and key case studies.”

This is Going to Hurt

by Adam Kay

The frank and honest diaries of a junior doctor that reflect both the emotional and comedic sides of medicine.

“I found it useful as it gave a very honest and at times funny, account of his time working as a doctor and shows the brutal reality of how challenging medicine really can be at times.”

Do No Harm

by Henry Marsh (2014)

An insight into the highs and lows of a life dedicated to operating on the human brain.

“I found this book useful as it is a very honest account of the highs and lows of being a doctor and gives an idea of the difficult decisions that doctors face.”

The Emperor of all Maladies

by Siddhartha Mukherjee (2011)

An exploration of cancer, chronicling the history of the illness and a look to the future of cancer treatments.

When Breath Becomes Air

by Paul Kalanithi (2016)

At the age of thirty-six, on the verge of completing a decade's training as a neurosurgeon, Paul Kalanithi was diagnosed with inoperable lung cancer. This book chronicles his transition from doctor to patient and facing your own mortality.

Trust Me, I'm a Junior Doctor

by Max Pemberton (2008)

Starting on the evening before he begins working as a junior doctor, this book tracks Pemberton's journey through his first year in the NHS.

God Bless the NHS

by Roger Taylor (2013)

A book exploring healthcare political action taken by doctors and the government amidst the passing of the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat

by Oliver Sacks (1985)

A neurologist discusses his experiences and histories of some of his patients and their conditions.

"I found this a heart-warming book which showed me the importance of integrating care into family life and relationships and how much a patient's family can be their rock during poor health, and how to accommodate for this as a doctor."

PODCASTS

The Geeky Medics

Hosts a variety of guests with discussions of specialities, healthcare and medical education.

How to Become a Doctor (Medic Mentor)

Hosted by two current medical students they share their day-to-day whilst also discussing current affairs and top tips.

"[G]ave me great insight into the excitement and challenge of medical school and the process of deciding on a specialty and surviving through the turbulent nature of medical school and medical practice."

Junior Docs

Two juniors talk about their experiences making the transition from medical student to junior doctor.

King's Fund podcasts

A podcast talking about key issues and bid ideas in health and care. "For prospective students, it can give a great insight from professionals themselves into some of the challenges of the system, but also how they can be dealt with too."

Life After the Letters

Hosted by two doctors who met whilst working in their first hospital they chat through the stories and challenges that junior doctors face every day.

"I like this podcast because it is by ethnic minorities like myself, and touches on key scenarios that doctors face daily."

NHS England Podcast

The official NHS podcast which provides commentary and information about NHS health care services, policy, and success stories.

Scrubbed In

A podcast by two junior doctors in the UK discussing everything from their journey from medical school to becoming doctors and the realities of working in the NHS.

"This podcast enabled me to make a better-informed decision regarding a career in medicine."

Sharp Scratch

Hosted by the BMJ, this podcast has variety of guests including medical students, junior doctors and experts to discuss what you need to know to be a good doctor but might not learn at medical school.

"[T]his was a good way to prepare for the reality of what studying medicine is like and also was a good way to hear from current medical students, including how they find being at university studying medicine and hear advice they may have, as well as keeping up to date with current issues in medicine too."

BMJ Talk Medicine Podcasts

A BMJ podcast which discusses current research and findings in medicine, allowing you to keep up to date with the latest in the medical world.

"I really enjoyed listening to some of these podcasts prior to my MMI interview at St Georges. They often have lots of podcasts available talking about different areas of medicine and current news in medicine."

TV SHOWS

24 hours in A&E

(Channel 4)

Set across multiple hospitals, including St George's Hospital in London, the show gives an insight into emergency medicine, multidisciplinary teams and patient care.

"I personally found so much to learn from the show itself - from the way doctors spoke to patients to how working in the NHS is all about teamwork. It can give fantastic insight into the skills and qualities doctors emulate and allow you to identify them to develop them too."

GPs Behind Closed Doors

(Channel 5)

An observational documentary which goes behind the scenes of GP surgeries.

"This gave me insight into the opposite side of medicine and comparing these two shows helped me identify whether hospital-based medicine or primary care medicine is more interesting to me."

Junior Doctors: Your Life in Their Hands

(BBC Three)

The show follows a brand-new group of qualified doctors with a first-hand perspective of their day-to-day.

"I really enjoyed watching this and found it fascinating to see what kind of procedures and work they had to do as new doctors. Although it showed the stressful parts of the career too... I found a great appreciation and respect for the career."

One Born Every Minute

(Channel 4)

Follows the day-to-day of a maternity ward in the UK.

The Surgeon's Cut

(Netflix)

A documentary following four surgeons who reflect on their lives and their professions.

"It is a very inspiring watch, as it makes you think 'I can't wait to be able to do this one day'."

This is Going to Hurt

(BBC One)

The adaptation of Adam Kay's book of the same name, exploring a doctors' experiences on a labour ward in the NHS.

YOUTUBE

“The medicine YouTube community is very large! I love how they all show that you can study medicine and still have a life. They show the various ways that different medical students work, to all achieve the same goal.”

Ali Abdaal

“On YouTube has a great series that helped me so much when applying to medical school. I found particularly useful the medical ethics and law series which helped me better understand these complex issues within the medical field along with examples through famous case studies which are great conversation points to raise within a medical interview.”

Anas Nuur Ali

“He has created medicine content from the beginning of his medicine degree to now being a doctor, and his channel is really useful in giving tips on how to be more productive, study smart and how to gain other useful skills that would be beneficial as a medical student. He also does a few ‘day in the life’ videos as a medical student.”

Jan Mukiibi

“I find Jan's YouTube useful for day in the life as a medical student vlog which provide good insight to what actually studying medicine is like.”

Journey2Med

“Where two medical students vlog their experiences in the life of a medical student, from exam tips to ‘day in the life of a medical student’ videos.”

Tasha Binnie

“Gives out really good advice on how to apply to medicine, do well at interview and what life is like as a medical student.”

That Medic

That Medic is a prominent YouTuber within the medic field. His easy-going, informative and transparent method of delivering certain topics surrounding medicine from his channel are a great way of becoming engaged in his perspectives of studying medicine and life as a doctor.