



# **Out of Practice: Candid Reflections of a Nursing Home Aide (Culture and Politics of Health Care Work)**

*Frederick M. Barken*

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Primary care medicine, as we know and remember it, is in crisis. While policymakers, government administrators, and the health insurance industry pay lip service to the personal relationship between physician and patient, dissatisfaction and disaffection run rampant among primary care doctors, and medical students steer clear in order to pursue more lucrative specialties. Patients feel helpless, well aware that they are losing a valued close connection as health care steadily becomes more transactional than relational. The thin-margin efficiency, rapid pace, and high volume demanded by the new health care economics do not work for primary care, an inherently slower, more personal, and uniquely tailored service. In *Out of Practice*, Dr. Frederick Barken juxtaposes his personal experience with the latest research on the transformations in the medical field. He offers a cool critique of the "market model of medicine" while vividly illustrating how the seemingly inexorable trend toward specialization in the last few decades has shifted emphasis away from what was once the foundation of medical practice. Dr. Barken addresses the complexities of modern practice-overuse of diagnostic studies, fragmentation of care, increasing reliance on an array of prescription drugs, and the practice of defensive medicine.

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