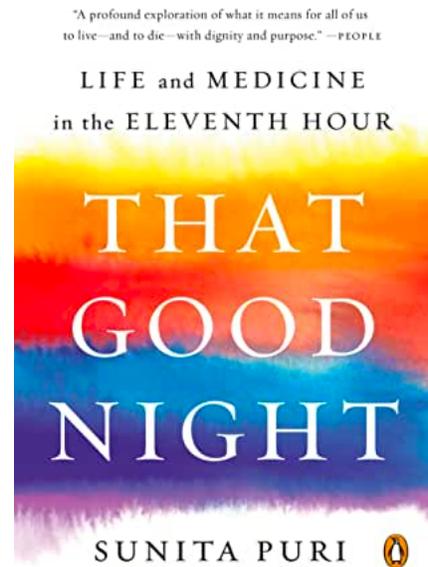


That Good Night by Dr. Sunita Puri

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Oh how I wish **Dr. Sunita Puri** has written **That Good Night** when I was a resident at the Univ. of IA Hosp. & Clinics back in 1979. It grew out of my need to answer a question. When returning to the hospital after a weekend often patients with life limiting conditions had been discharged and I wondered what would happen to them. That led me to wonder with others and ensued our effort to create a home care hospice in the early 1980's when hospice was a new idea in this country. As I immersed myself in her memories, my own memories came flooding back. When I read that the American Board of Medical Specialties didn't recognize hospice and palliative medicine as a distinct medical sub-specialty until 2006, a lot of my questions began to make sense. Seeing from behind her eyes helped me to see how difficult modern medicine is for people whose whole identity is to fix things. At some level I knew this, but at another level it seemed unreal.



On my first night as a resident chaplain I distinctly remember the terror I felt as my pager went off and I headed down the long darkened hall toward what I hoped was the right direction. At the end of the hall I could see the shape of someone and I imagined it to be the Spirit and found myself mentally shouting “I will give you what I can reach.” This moment of truth, for someone short enough to spend a lot of time asking people to reach things for me, freed me to enter into the chaos that awaited me. As long as I truly handed to those in need whatever I could reach, I could fail and still come out OK. Dr. Puri says this in so many eloquent ways there would be no way to list them all. As medical options become ever more complex, the questions of what should be done become ever more difficult.

I hope that all people walking the paths with patients might find this book and bring her wisdom into their lives. It is interesting that her whole lifetime is the very length of time I have been invited to share the struggles of patients and their families. In a way I feel like Simeon in Luke's gospel saying “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word: for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence on all people, a light for revelation to the (caregivers) Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”

Luke 2: 29-32.