ABOUT THE BOOK

In *Black Man in a White Coat: A Doctor’s Reflections on Race and Medicine*, Dr. Damon Tweedy examines the intersection of race and medicine. First, this memoir details his personal experiences as an African American male from a working-class family, one of only 13 African American students in his class, while attending Duke University Medical School. Second, he explores the cultural and socioeconomic causes of health disparities, especially in diseases that disproportionately affect African American patients. He also examines the three layers that contribute to these health challenges, namely, institutional systems, physician-patient relationships, and individual choices. Through it all, the author hopes to inspire others from similar backgrounds to believe that they can likewise achieve their goals.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Damon Tweedy, MD, JD serves as an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at Duke University Medical Center and as a staff physician at the Durham VA Medical Center. Following his completion of a medical degree at Duke University School of Medicine, as well as an internship and psychiatry residency at Duke Hospital, Dr. Tweedy earned a Juris Doctor degree from Yale Law School. He has published articles about the relationship between medicine and race in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and the *Annals of Internal Medicine*. His columns and op-ed writings have also appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Washington Post*, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, and the *Raleigh News & Observer*.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Reading *Black Man in a White Coat* offers the reader the opportunity to view medical education and practice through the perspective of Dr. Damon Tweedy and his personal, cultural, and economic background. How might you have perceived these same events differently and what are the filters through which you process life experiences?
2. How do you feel about Dr. Tweedy’s decision not to respond to his interaction with Dr. Gale and the assumption that he was a maintenance man in the classroom to fix a light bulb? Similarly, the author convinces Audrey not to request that Chester be transferred to another team of physicians and does not confront the physicians who diagnose Gary with Obsessive Compulsive Personality Disorder. How would you respond under these circumstances? Would your reaction be affected by your ethnic or cultural background, gender, or concern that you might be seen as a stereotype?
3. In *Black Man in a White Coat*, Dr. Damon Tweedy explores the causes of health disparities. What do you think is the greatest reason for these disparities and what can be done individually, institutionally, and societally to address them?
4. When Dr. Tweedy is on a rotation in Atlanta, he encounters a man in passing and instantly begins to wonder about his medical issues. He asks whether his medical training has caused him to see people as a list of potential health problems rather than as individuals. Does training in the health care field do this and how can it be countered?
5. The author often ponders whether or not he has a special obligation as a black medical student or a black physician. Does someone from an underrepresented minority in a field have any special responsibilities to represent or to serve his or her ethnic group, socioeconomic class, or gender?
6. Damon Tweedy, MD recounts the story of his visit to an urgent care clinic when his knee is bothering him and the less than optimal care he receives until revealing that he is a physician. Do you believe that patients are provided varying levels of care based upon assumptions or judgments made about them? Have you observed this either as a health care provider or as a patient?
7. What are the challenges in the Provider-Patient relationship when each are from differing ethnic or socioeconomic backgrounds and experiences? Do you believe that someone of the same ethnicity, socioeconomic background, or gender can provide better care to a patient? Why or why not?