



It's All in Your Head: True Stories of Imaginary Illness

Suzanne O'Sullivan

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A neurologist explores the very real world of psychosomatic illness.

Most of us accept the way our heart flutters when we set eyes on the one we secretly admire, or the sweat on our brow as we start the presentation we do not want to give. But few of us are fully aware of how dramatic our body's reactions to emotions can sometimes be.

Take Pauline, who first became ill when she was fifteen. What seemed at first to be a urinary infection became joint pain, then food intolerances, then life-threatening appendicitis. And then one day, after a routine operation, Pauline lost all the strength in her legs. Shortly after that her convulsions started. But Pauline's tests are normal; her symptoms seem to have no physical cause whatsoever.

Pauline may be an extreme case, but she is by no means alone. As many as a third of men and women visiting their GP have symptoms that are medically unexplained. In most, an emotional root is suspected and yet, when it comes to a diagnosis, this is the very last thing we want to hear, and the last thing doctors want to say.

In *It's All in Your Head* consultant neurologist Dr Suzanne O'Sullivan takes us on a journey through the very real world of psychosomatic illness. She takes us from the extreme -- from paralysis, seizures and blindness - - to more everyday problems such as tiredness and pain. Meeting her patients, she encourages us to look deep inside the human condition. There we find the secrets we are all capable of keeping from ourselves, and our age-old failure to credit the intimate and extraordinary connection between mind and body.

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