

BADGER BOOKS, Inc.
PO Box 192
Oregon WI 53575
(800) 928-2372
www.badgerbooks.com

Contact: Mary Lou Santovec
Email: marylou@badgerbooks.com

Phone: 920/674-5280

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CPR with a Toilet Plunger

OREGON, Wis. — Imagine the headlines when a toilet plunger saves a man's life. Yes, it really did happen. When a man was having a heart attack, his son tried to give him CPR but didn't know how. In desperation, he grabbed the first thing he could think of, a toilet plunger, applied it to his father's chest and ultimately saved his life. This and other stories of mishaps, bizarre treatments, malaprops and misfunctions can be found in the new book, **The Humor of Healing: An Amusing History of American Medicine.**

Written by Dr. Donald Johnson, a retired neurosurgeon, the book contains such real examples of medical treatments as these.

- When surgery was performed in the home, it wasn't unusual to see a group of people watching the procedure outside of the patient's window. The faster the operation, the more respected the surgeon.
- By default, colonial governors became medical advisors to their colonies. Gov. John Winthrop of Massachusetts recommended those suffering from smallpox and various fevers to quaff a drink made from pulverized toads.
- When a doctor prescribed a soapsuds enema for a patient with abdominal pain, he discovered that the patient refused to take the treatment as prescribed and drank the concoction instead.
- A young girl with a bad case of acne was found to have an endocrine tumor that was affecting her gender. When the physician told her family that she needed surgery to prevent her from becoming a boy, the family rejected the idea saying they'd just change her name.
- On her first night of duty, the first woman physician appointed to the staff of a New York City hospital was assigned to do all the bladder catheterizations on the male surgical ward as a prank by the male doctors.
- A child was brought into a Philadelphia hospital with a cockroach in each ear. Attending physicians had a chance to test the effectiveness of two separate removal techniques, mineral oil and lidocaine. Mineral oil killed the roach, which was then removed with an ear scope. But when lidocaine, a local anesthetic, was sprayed into the ear, "the occupant exited at a convulsive rate of speed and raced across the floor."
- An intern who got drunk was delivered to his own hospital emergency room. When he awoke, he found his colleagues had immobilized him in a plaster cast from head to toe except for a dangling catheter.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Dr. Donald Johnson studied at the University of Wisconsin-Superior and received his undergraduate degree from UW-Madison. He earned his MD from George Washington University in Washington, DC and subsequent degrees in neurophysiology from the University of Minnesota where he worked as a research fellow. He practiced neurosurgery at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., and had a neurological/neurosurgical practice in Washington, DC for 30 years.

To learn more about *The Humor of Healing* contact **Mary Lou Santovec, Marketing Manager, 800/928-2372. Visit www.badgerbooks.com for more information.**