

A Review of

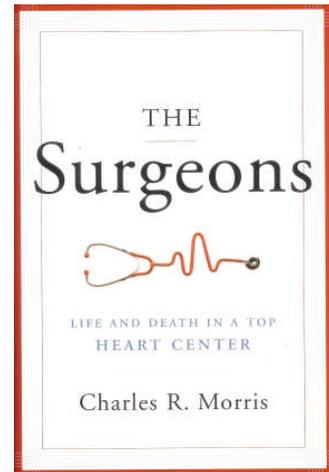
The Surgeons

Life and Death in a Top Heart Center

Author: Charles R. Morris (Nov. 2007)

Reviewed by Jim Gleason, heart recipient

Embedded within America's busiest heart transplant center, Columbia-Presbyterian hospital in NYC, for almost a full year, journalist and historian, Charles Morris offers us amazing insight into the inner workings of a cardiac center as well as candid thoughts from the medical professionals working there. Equally amazing is that the center not only gave him unlimited access to literally everything there – surgeries, closed-door meetings, late night organ recovery runs, candid conversations with staff at all levels, critical outcome reviews, patient personal interviews – but allowed him freedom to write this book without any preview or restrictions on what he could report. As such, we are privy to both their successes and failures, first hand accounts of life saving surgeries and human mistakes that resulted in death, reflections by world renowned cardiologists as they face the challenges of their trade with the youngest of newborns and oldest of the aging who at death's door place their lives in the hands of such talent. These reflections cover both patient events and the state of medical science today.



Morris goes beyond just his observational reporting, building on insights gained from this unique partnership and opportunity to offer fact based in-depth discussion with full chapters devoted to several current issues affecting the world of medicine. Topics treated include “a very short history” of heart surgery; a detailed description of the organ donation process (supported by his first hand experience accompanying a recovery team through the donation surgery and later into the resultant transplant surgery itself); the medical training process for doctors; the future of heart surgery; the financial side of medical practice and medical centers; a critical evaluation of the statistical reporting for drug testing as used for approving new drugs; and a dissertation on national health care policy. What makes these topics such interesting reading is how Mr. Morris supports the discussion with insights gleaned from experiences and conversations during his year of living in this particular center's multifaceted environment that pushes the cutting edge of cardiac practice in so many ways, providing leadership and improved techniques that impact patients and practice worldwide. In that final chapter, looking beyond the forces driving health care's expansion and the implications on the national economy, he shares his thoughts on important managerial and policy challenges and potential financial solutions. These speculations are supported with many facts and statistics that make for a thought provoking brain workout, but an interesting read on multiple levels in the process. Be prepared to be fascinated by the human insights into the exciting world of cardiology and then inspired to think on the big picture level with these well thought out and equally well presented ideas.

This 317 page book includes an excellent 2000 line cross referenced Index, Note pages (20) that expand and add many more references to other supporting documentation for

each chapter's content, as well as an Appendix that graphically details how the heart works and yet another describing the New York State Cardiac Hospital Rating System. Taken altogether, this serves as an excellent research resource. Whether for research or general reading, I highly recommend this book to patients and medical professionals interested in learning about, or involved with, the workings of a medical center and its highly specialized yet very human world of cardiac surgery. Through this gifted author's eyes and words you will experience an exciting environment of heart reality that very few ever will first hand.

Note: **The Surgeons** is available in hard cover from Amazon.com or BarnesandNoble.com

Brief bio:

Jim Gleason, receiving his own heart transplant Oct. '94, retired after 37 years with Unisys Corporation in 2005, is a volunteer with NKF and UNOS as well as a nationally recognized speaker and author. His own book, **A Gift from the Heart**, is offered free in thanks to his donor family and can be obtained by contacting him at GLEASONJIM@AOL.COM.