

# HOPKINS

## MEDICINE

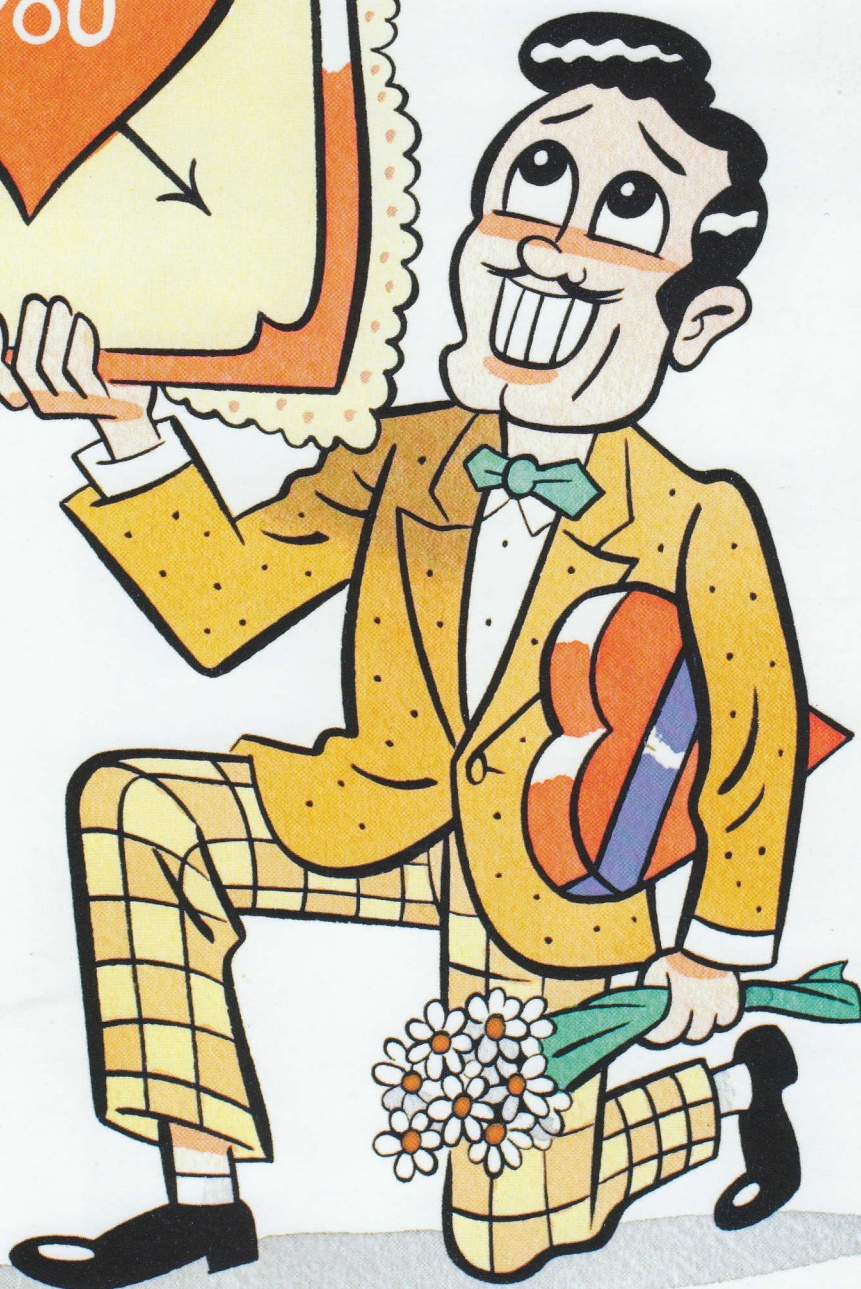
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## When Suitors Come Calling

Amid seductive offers from competitors, how can we keep our faculty stars close to the Dome?

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# EATING TO COMBAT ILL HEALTH—AND THE BOOK ON BACKS

Physicians weigh in on the health properties of food; the latest on back care.

## Food and Nutrients in Disease Management

Ingrid Kohlstadt, MD, editor  
CRC Press (2009)

In the 12th century, the Jewish Egyptian philosopher and physician Moshe ben Maimonides cited ancient Greek texts in his recommendation of chicken soup as a remedy for respiratory tract infections. Grandmothers and mothers ever since have perpetuated that advice, putting chicken and vegetables in pots of simmering water to produce hot, soothing soup for ill family members. Indeed, “food and nutrients are the original medicine,” writes **Ingrid Kohlstadt '93** in the preface to *Food and Nutrients in Disease Management*. It's an exhaustive, 717-page compilation she has edited of articles by 64 physicians (including herself and six additional ones from Hopkins) about foods, the nutrients in them, and nutritional supplements that physicians can use as “clinical tools powerful enough to make sick people well.”

“Food can be used for healing, but food is not medicine in the same way a drug is medicine,” Kohlstadt notes. It nevertheless still can play a role in the practice of medicine, she says, and the clinical experts who have joined her in writing the chapters for this book “share their insights on the medical literature about studies on the effectiveness of food and nutrients in treating disease.”

Divided into nine sections, the book covers the ways food and nutrients can be used along with medicines to treat disorders of the ears, eyes, nose, and throat; cardiovascular and pulmonary diseases; gastrointestinal diseases; endocrine and dermatologic disorders; renal diseases; neurological and psychiatric disorders; musculoskeletal and soft tissue disorders; cancers of the lung, breast, cervix, colon, and prostate; and reproductive health issues involving pregnancy and male infertility.

Among the Hopkins physicians who contributed to the book

besides Kohlstadt (who previously edited *Scientific Evidence for Musculoskeletal, Bariatric, and Sports Nutrition*) are Majid Fotuhi, assistant professor of neurology; Linda Lee, director of the Integrative Medicine and Digestive Center; Payam Mohassel, MD; Gerard Mullen, director of the Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology; and Melissa Munsell and Octavia Pickett-Blakely, both fellows in that division.

Kohlstadt confesses in her preface that while she awaited arrival of the chapters from these and the other authors who “come from extremely diverse backgrounds” in medicine, she “nervously wondered what I would do if one chapter concluded ‘black’ and the other said ‘white.’” That did not happen, she writes. Her team “has spoken with remarkable convergence. Each chapter supports the others with varying shades of pearl, dove, and silver.”

## The Back Book

Ziya L. Gokaslan, MD  
Lee Hunter Riley III, MD  
Hopkins Press, 2008

While most people with a common cold don't immediately call their physician, those who suffer back pain—a malady afflicting 80 percent of Americans—often do. But Hopkins orthopaedic surgeons Ziya L. Gokaslan and Lee Hunter Riley say that in most cases, people should treat back pain as they do the common cold. It “generally goes away on its own, without treatment of any kind other than comfort measures.”

In *The Back Book*, their compact, smoothly written guide to the sometimes baffling world of back ailments, Gokaslan and Riley strive to provide “a balanced overview of options for the millions of people suffering with problems with their backs.” Their even-

handed narrative includes acknowledgment that despite all we know about back pain, it still occasionally defies explanation.

Gokaslan is the Donlin M. Long Professor of neurosurgery, oncology, and orthopaedic surgery at Hopkins, as well as director of the Neurosurgical Spine Program and vice director of the Department of Neurosurgery. Riley, an associate professor of orthopaedic surgery and neurosurgery, is director of the Orthopaedic Spine Division.

In nine concise chapters, separated into two sections, they cover some of the many conditions, disorders, and events that may lead to back pain, then describe ways of treating it—ranging from medicinal, physical therapy, and surgery to chronic pain management.

The first section, “What's Causing Your Symptoms?” includes a description of the spine's anatomy; things that can go wrong with the back; who might develop back pain; and spinal tumors and metastatic cancer.

Part two, “Getting a Diagnosis and Seeking Treatment,” addresses what sufferers might do to ease their pain without surgery; factors to consider when contemplating surgery; and what going under the knife entails. A chapter by Kristin R. Archer, PhD, DPT, adjunct assistant professor of orthopaedic surgery, describes physical therapies for pain, strength, and function.

Back pain can be more than just annoying. It can cripple a person's ability to live normally. Yet even with Gokaslan's and Riley's impressive credentials and skillful treatment, today's remarkable diagnostic technologies—and the exceptionally useful, comprehensive overview in *The Back Book*—the authors humbly concede that the causes of some back pain remain mysterious. “We will not be able to find out exactly what's wrong with every patient, and despite our best efforts with medical treatment and sometimes surgery, some patients will still have a lot of pain,” they write. **Neil A. Grauer**

