



# Patient H.M.: A Story of Memory, Madness, and Family Secrets

*Luke Dittrich*

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“Oliver Sacks meets Stephen King”\* in this propulsive, haunting journey into the life of the most studied human research subject of all time, the amnesic known as Patient H.M., a man who forever altered our understanding of how memory works—and whose treatment raises deeply unsettling questions about the human cost of scientific progress. For readers of *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* comes a story that has much to teach us about our relentless pursuit of knowledge.

\**Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

**NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY *THE WASHINGTON POST* AND NPR**

In 1953, a twenty-seven-year-old factory worker named Henry Molaison—who suffered from severe epilepsy—received a radical new version of the then-common lobotomy, targeting the most mysterious structures in the brain. The operation failed to eliminate Henry’s seizures, but it did have an unintended effect: Henry was left profoundly amnesic, unable to create long-term memories. Over the next sixty years, Patient H.M., as Henry was known, became the most studied individual in the history of neuroscience, a human guinea pig who would teach us much of what we know about memory today.

*Patient H.M.* is, at times, a deeply personal journey. Dittrich’s grandfather was the brilliant, morally complex surgeon who operated on Molaison—and thousands of other patients. The author’s investigation into the dark roots of modern memory science ultimately forces him to confront unsettling secrets in his own family history, and to reveal the tragedy that fueled his grandfather’s relentless experimentation—experimentation that would revolutionize our understanding of ourselves.

Dittrich uses the case of Patient H.M. as a starting point for a kaleidoscopic journey, one that moves from the first recorded brain surgeries in ancient Egypt to the cutting-edge laboratories of MIT. He takes readers inside the old asylums and operating theaters where psychosurgeons, as they called themselves, conducted their human experiments, and behind the scenes of a bitter custody battle over the ownership of the most important brain in the world.

*Patient H.M.* combines the best of biography, memoir, and science journalism to create a haunting, endlessly fascinating story, one that reveals the wondrous and devastating things that can happen when hubris, ambition, and human imperfection collide.

**Praise for *Patient H.M.***

“An exciting, artful blend of family and medical history.”—*The New York Times*

“In prose both elegant and intimate, and often thrilling, *Patient H.M.* is an important book about the wages not of sin but of science.”—*The Washington Post*

“Spellbinding . . . The fact that Dittrich looks critically at the actual process of scientific investigation is just

one of the things to admire about *Patient H.M.*”—*The New York Times Book Review*

“*Patient H.M.* tells one of the most fascinating and disturbing stories in the annals of medicine, weaving in ethics, philosophy, a personal saga, the history of neurosurgery, the mysteries of human memory, and an exploration of human ego.”—**Sheri Fink, M.D., Pulitzer Prize winner and author of *Five Days at Memorial***

“Dittrich explores the limits of science and the mind. In the process, he rescues an iconic life from oblivion. Dittrich is well aware that while we are the sum of what we may remember, we’re also at the mercy of what we can forget. This is classic reporting and myth-making at the same time.”—**Colum McCann, author of *Let the Great World Spin***

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#### **Susan Larabee:**

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#### **James Wood:**

People live in this new morning of lifestyle always aim to and must have the free time or they will get great deal of stress from both daily life and work. So , if we ask do people have spare time, we will say absolutely of course. People is human not really a huge robot. Then we consult again, what kind of activity do you possess when the spare time coming to an individual of course your answer may unlimited right. Then do you try this one, reading textbooks. It can be your alternative within spending your spare time, the book you have read is actually Patient H.M.: A Story of Memory, Madness, and Family Secrets.

#### **Floyd Brown:**

Reading can called mind hangout, why? Because if you find yourself reading a book specially book entitled Patient H.M.: A Story of Memory, Madness, and Family Secrets your thoughts will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in each aspect that maybe unidentified for but surely will become your mind friends. Imaging just about every word written in a publication then become one form conclusion and explanation that will maybe you never get prior to. The Patient H.M.: A Story of Memory, Madness, and Family Secrets giving you a different experience more than blown away your head but also giving you useful information for your better life in this particular era. So now let us explain to you the relaxing pattern here is your body and mind are going to be pleased when you are finished looking at it, like winning a sport. Do you want to

try this extraordinary spending spare time activity?

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