HEALTH & MEDICINE


A candid search for identity leads journalist Donlan to ask: Where do I stop, and where does the illness begin? Shortly after the birth of his daughter, Donlan felt like a tourist in his own skin as he experienced fatigue, brain fog, and tingling sensations, among other symptoms. He describes multiple sclerosis as two diagnoses at once: a condition, and an incurable one. To better understand a condition that can be difficult to describe, he interviews neuroscientists and researches the work of pioneering French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot. With his concept of self in flux, Donlan struggles with self-discovery, becoming his own inner explorer while trying not to become an amateur neurologist. The author shines when portraying his family, siblings, and parents, and his efforts to keep them away out of self-preservation. His hospital diaries display the conflicting emotional and physical responses to pain: Am I overreacting or underreacting? For Donlan, both parenthood and multiple sclerosis are an adventure, and he often wonders about limitations and failure. VERDICT As one of the few books that touch upon the intersections of parenthood and chronic illness, it would be easy to recommend this affecting memoir to both communities; it should also find a home among readers of medical memoirs.—Stephanie Sendaula, Library Journal


Hormones regulate most of the body’s physiological processes. Metabolism, immunity, sleep, mood, sexual development and desire, and the ability to fight and flee from danger all depend on them. Epstein, a physician at Yale and Columbia, presents a history of the scientific discoveries that led to knowledge of the existence of these powerful substances. The author introduces the colorful researchers who performed experiments that would never be permitted with current ethical regulations: William Bayliss and Ernest Starling, who discovered the role of the pancreas in digestion and angered anti-vivisectionists in the process; Louis Berman, who thought that hormones caused criminal behavior; and Eugen Steinach, who touted vasectomies to preserve male strength. Readers learn of snake oil cures and the important therapeutic roles that hormones play. Transplanting goat testicles led to disaster, but using insulin for diabetes and replacing thyroid and adrenal hormones when they are deficient saves lives. VERDICT An engaging book of medical history that teaches readers about important aspects of physiology.—Barbara Bibel, formerly Oakland P.L.


If Julia Child and Jacques Pépin represent the French side of PBS’s cooking shows, Bastianich dominates the Italian offerings. Long before the host of Lidia’s Italy was instructing viewers on the techniques of authentic Italian food, she was a successful chef, opening her first restaurant in Queens, NY, in 1971. None of it was easy; but much was rewarding. Bastianich describes her childhood in Istria, present-day Croatia. She then recounts her immigration to the United States (including two years in a refugee camp), assimilation to American life, partnership with husband Felice, and the many influences on her career in food. The style will be familiar to watchers of her show: breezy and comfortable. Throughout, Bastianich sounds like