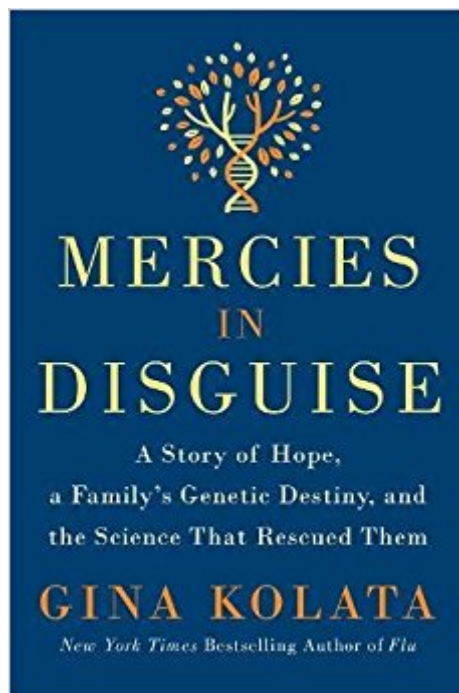




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Mercies In Disguise: A Story Of Hope, A Family's Genetic Destiny, And The Science That Rescued Them



Synopsis

"...a moving, suspenseful page-turner that's likely to become a classic of medical storytelling."

—The Washington Post
New York Times science reporter Gina Kolata follows a family through genetic illness and one courageous daughter who decides her fate shall no longer be decided by a genetic flaw. The phone rings. The doctor from California is on the line. "Are you ready Amanda?" The two people Amanda Baxley loves the most had begged her not to be tested—at least, not now. But she had to find out. If your family carried a mutated gene that foretold a brutal illness and you were offered the chance to find out if you'd inherited it, would you do it? Would you walk toward the problem, bravely accepting whatever answer came your way? Or would you avoid the potential bad news as long as possible? In *Mercies in Disguise*, acclaimed New York Times science reporter and bestselling author Gina Kolata tells the story of the Baxleys, an almost archetypal family in a small town in South Carolina. A proud and determined clan, many of them doctors, they are struck one by one with an inscrutable illness. They finally discover the cause of the disease after a remarkable sequence of events that many saw as providential. Meanwhile, science, progressing for a half a century along a parallel track, had handed the Baxleys a resolution—not a cure, but a blood test that would reveal who had the gene for the disease and who did not. And science would offer another dilemma—fertility specialists had created a way to spare the children through an expensive process. A work of narrative nonfiction, *Mercies in Disguise* is the story of a family that took matters into its own hands when the medical world abandoned them. It's a story of a family that had to deal with unspeakable tragedy and yet did not allow it to tear them apart. And it is the story of a young woman—Amanda Baxley—who faced the future head on, determined to find a way to disrupt her family's destiny.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"[Kolata's] book recalls two other classic tales of medical anthropology, Rebecca Skloot's *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* and Anne Fadiman's *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*." *The Washington Post*

"Mercies in Disguise is the true story of one family's struggle with a rare and deadly inherited illness. Gina Kolata's prose brings to life the science as well as the maverick scientists who solve the riddle. When a blood test can now predict who is destined to be an invalid while still young, and who is spared, we agonize with family members over whether we'd want such knowledge. Mercies in Disguise reads like a medical thriller; I simply couldn't stop once I began." *Dr. Abraham Verghese, author of the New York Times bestseller Cutting for Stone*

"Mercies in Disguise is an extraordinary medical mystery, scientific history and, above all, human drama. Once I started reading, I couldn't stop. Then, when I finished it, I couldn't stop thinking about the Baxleys and the choices they faced." *Sylvia Nasar, author of A Beautiful Mind, winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award for Biography*

"Absorbing... the interweaving tales of science, family, and medical ethics make for a compelling read." *Library Journal*

"Gripping... Kolata's book reads like a medical thriller." *Publishers Weekly*

"A story that pits hope against fate, courage against uncertainty... Kolata delivers an inspiring chronicle of a remarkable family, medical advances, and redefining destiny." *Booklist*

GINA KOLATA (M.A.) is a writer and medical reporter for The New York Times. She has previously written several books, including *Flu*, and edited collections of popular science writing. Ms. Kolata lives with her husband in Princeton, New Jersey.

A compelling story of courage and resilience told masterfully by an incredibly gifted writer with great insight into the human condition. This is an inspirational story about normal people, who when faced with a horrible fate showed that they could rise above it and show us what genuine heroism really is. While it deals with a complex disease, the writer carefully explains its aspects in language that most anyone can understand and appreciate.

This was a quick read about a family and how they learned about and dealt with a genetic disease. I enjoyed the writing style and quick pace of this medical mystery-type book.

If I could rate this book a 10, I would. This is honestly the best book I have read in quite sometime. It is an incredibly personal and honest look into a family's life dealing with a devastating and terminal hereditary disease that few doctors know anything about. And how their journey has led them to do anything and everything they can to fight back, no matter how difficult or controversial it may be.

Absolutely one of the most inspiring biographies I ever read. Right in my hometown.

Fascinating medical story, and heart wrenching family story, all at the same time.

Excellent! Well written, easy to comprehend despite all the technical jargon, and enormously human. This true story will stay with me for a long time...

Beautifully told story of a disease, of genetics, of courage. Told through the life of several generations of a family, it explains the tragedy, the options, and the deep emotions who have to face a dreadful diagnosis. It tears at your emotions

I cannot imagine what this family went through to finally get the answer they needed. I wonder if the outcome would have been the same for a family without the medical backgrounds that some of them had. Loved the book because I have a personal interest in prion diseases and wanted to learn more. This book provided the scientific background as well as the human interest story of a family who had to endure it.

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