

Aroused: The History of Hormones and How They Control Just About Everything

Randi Hutter Epstein

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A guided tour through the strange science of hormones and the age-old quest to control them.

Metabolism, behavior, sleep, mood swings, the immune system, fighting, fleeing, puberty, and sex: these are just a few of the things our bodies control with hormones. Armed with a healthy dose of wit and curiosity, medical journalist Randi Hutter Epstein takes us on a journey through the unusual history of these potent chemicals from a basement filled with jarred nineteenth-century brains to a twenty-first-century hormone clinic in Los Angeles.

Brimming with fascinating anecdotes, illuminating new medical research, and humorous details, *Aroused* introduces the leading scientists who made life-changing discoveries about the hormone imbalances that ail us, as well as the charlatans who used those discoveries to peddle false remedies. Epstein exposes the humanity at the heart of hormone science with her rich cast of characters, including a 1920s doctor promoting vasectomies as a way to boost libido, a female medical student who discovered a pregnancy hormone in the 1940s, and a mother who collected pituitaries, a brain gland, from cadavers as a source of growth hormone to treat her son. Along the way, Epstein explores the functions of hormones such as leptin, oxytocin, estrogen, and testosterone, demystifying the science of endocrinology.

A fascinating look at the history and science of some of medicine's most important discoveries, *Aroused* reveals the shocking history of hormones through the back rooms, basements, and labs where endocrinology began.

Aroused: The History of Hormones and How They Control Just About Everything Details

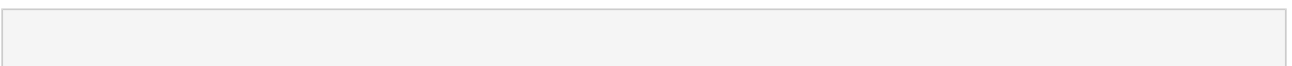
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Carol says

Will we ever understand our bodies? If we ever do understand our bodies (or more specifically, our own personal body), will we be able to manage it in a healthy, intelligent way? If we are destined to trust care givers for our personal care, what will the outcome be? This read of the current knowledge of our endocrinology was very interesting to me. It is so good to have a bit more knowledge about just how different individual glands are composed.

Mindy says

Great book about the history and science of hormones. Most interesting is how much patient rights have changed over the past century and how much further endocrinology could go in the future.

Hanna Yost says

A historical review of how endocrinology came to be a cohesive branch of science and medicine rather than a disjointed study of various glands and secretions by scientists who focused only on individual parts of the body, rather than the whole. Epstein startles and delights with tales of parents collecting pituitaries and university basements full of brains.

Christina Dudley says

This was a fast, fascinating history of the discovery of hormones, the quack fads they set off (e.g, vasectomies to increase virility --both Freud and Yeats had one), what the various hormones do, and continued learnings.

It's a bit repetitive in places but generally a great read.

Sarah says

Read thru this one quickly today. It was enough to make me throughly fascinated with the study of hormones, and also enough to assure me that, although the author admits there is a great deal they don't know and merely guess at, the intellectual elite will take this opportunity to blame the mysterious "magical" hormones for every sin you can think of and some you can't.

Sharon says

Behavior, hunger, mood swings, maternal love, sex, the immune system, and more are controlled by the hormones that have always been produced by our bodies. Epstein introduces us to the history and the scientists responsible for that history and throws in humor along with the story.

Samantha Gramer says

I love the story feel of this book. Like opening door an peeking in on history

Laura Cobrinik says

Randi Hutter Epstein's book, "Aroused: The History of Hormones and How They Control Just About Everything," was a fantastic book which explains a medical subject with humor and seriousness. I both laughed and cried when reading this book.

Hutter described, people with extreme obesity, children who were way below average and whether they need growth hormones...She related hormones to the menstrual cycle, pregnancy, when discussing Estrogen. On the flip side she discussed Testosterone when discussing the male's responsibility with childbearing and as a way for a man to feel more "manly." Epstein's book traces the history of hormones from the early 19th century with the "Fat Lady" of the circus and other "freaks," to today's new gender option, the "Transgender" sex that now appears on college applications. When discussion the "Transgender" subject she used the example of a man, a father and a husband, who was transitioning to a Woman, and to its complications that arose.

This is the second book of Epstein's that I've read. Again, I could not put it down! Epstein uses sources and interviews with the best of the best doctors in her field. And she should definitely know who the best Doctor's are, as her late father, Dr. Robert Hutter was the best of the best as a Pathologist at St. Barnabas Medical Center in Livingston, NJ. Not only one to catch things right away, but also a Doctor who understood the patients' anxieties as well....

Laura Cobrinik,
Boonton Township, NJ

Sarah Rosenthal says

More of a historical review, rather than a "current" analysis. Still well written, interesting and accessible to the lay-person

Amy says

This text is written for all audiences. While many of the topics covered are complex and scientific, Epstein

has written about them in an approachable way, even for someone with little or no scientific background knowledge. By choosing interesting individual anecdotes to focus on, she draws the reader into each of the hormonal topics. Chapters are of reasonable length, making the book easy to pick up and put down. The reader is sure to gain new knowledge, while also finding herself laughing aloud from time to time.

Aroused consists of gathered scientific anecdotes and topical research on various hormones and their effects on humans. Each of the book's chapters focuses on a different piece of the hormonal puzzle. This table of contents provides a clearer picture: 1. The fat bride 2. Hormones ... as we may call them 3. Pickled brains 4. Killer hormones 5. The virile vasectomy 6. Soul mates in sex hormones 7. Making gender 8. Growing up 9. Measuring the immeasurable 10. Growing pains 11. Hotheads : the mysteries of menopause 12. Testosterone endopreneurs 13. Oxytocin : that lovin' feeling 14. Transitioning 15. Insatiable : the hypothalamus and obesity. While a reader may still have questions, rest assured, Epstein will address them all.

Judith says

This is a quick read giving an overview of the history of medical research on hormones and the current state of affairs. What I took away is that we do not know much but suspect there is much, much more to learn. Epstein covers the scandals of hormone therapy (transplantation of goat testicles, for example) and other oddities of medical science of "the day" and the lack of openness of medical experts to patients of what they did and did not know. I grew up in the time when doctors were "gods" and one took their recommendations without any hesitation.

Ricky says

"Aroused: The History of Hormones and How They Control Just About Everything" is a wonderful read. Randi Hutter Epstein employs her unique wit, and her gifted ability to make her writing relevant and familiar, to present a history of hormones that reads more like a novel than a history or medical account.

Epstein begins talking about sunbathing with Johnson's baby oil and an album cover wrapped in aluminum foil—something to which all us 1970s kids can relate. And before it hits you that the subject matter has changed, you are reading about her grandmother's affliction with Addison's disease, the coining of the phrase "hormone" in 1905, and nineteenth-century experiments on a dog's liver. From that jumping off point, we get "Aroused."

Epstein discusses hormones in the context of everything from Leopold and Loeb to Coney Island freak shows. But her writing is more than historical anecdotes. "Aroused: The History of Hormones and How They Control Just About Everything" is meticulously researched and informative. As Epstein points out, hormones are "so much more" than "boobs and periods and sex."

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Andi says

‘Aroused’ is fascinating and appalling, as pretty much all books chronicling any part of the history of medicine are. It makes me wonder how we will be judged in history for what we consider current standards of care.

Ester says

Excellent!

Randi says

Very interesting and very developed. The topics jump around a LOT, but they all bring something new and cohesive to the table.
