

## Bullets and Brains: Essays probe the intersection of neurology and society

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*Bullets and Brains*, by Andrew Nathan Wilner, MD, is a collection of over 100 essays from his weekly blogs and columns for Medscape.com that are fairly short, uniformly interesting, and which cover a smorgasbord of fascinating neurological topics as well as subjects that may be of greater public health importance than scientific interest, like an early essay on the incompatibility of brains and bullets, slowly moving on to the related incompatibility of trauma and the brain. I found no politics here, "just the facts." While recognizing the attraction of boxing to many people, including himself, he is clear that blows to the head are bad for the brain and should be avoided at all costs.

Dr. Wilner speculates about the influences on the brain in essays on love, sexual attraction and bonding, and appears to be even-handed, willing to listen

to people who, at least on the surface, appear to be inhabiting a parallel universe which is less scientific than our own. On the other hand, he holds no sympathy for parents who deny their children the protection from inoculation, preferring them to risk permanent brain damage from an infection, than to suffer the risk, manufactured by their own fears, of other brain damage from the inoculations themselves. He discusses his medical missionary work in the Philippines, although not discussing how well-received childhood inoculations are for people in poor areas who actually have first-hand experience with the devastation caused by infectious neurological disorders now uncommon in wealthier countries.

He addresses the unusual – "Blue Person Syndrome," for example, is a chapter which describes a startling side effect of an epilepsy drug which may cause blue-gray skin discoloration. Other essays address clinical advances, as in a non-technical review of carotid stenting, and clinical setbacks, as occurred with a *New England Journal of Medicine* article that found a strong association between caffeine consumption and pancreatic disease, only to be later refuted by an equally well-performed study published in the same journal. Clinical medicine, like biology in general, is not a physics experiment. Diversity often influences outcome.

Dr. Wilner is optimistic about the future of neurology, a good vantage point for writing a book focused on diseases and malfunction. He has an inquiring and intellectual mind, a strong scientific background and an engaging literary style. These combine in an interesting and well-written compendium covering a wide spectrum of medicine, with a neurological focus. Readers won't be disappointed. In the meantime, you can catch his blogs on Medscape.com/neurology or <http://blogs.medscape.com/neuronotes>.



**ANDREW NATHAN WILNER, MD**

Author Andrew N. Wilner, MD, grew up in Fall River, Mass., and graduated from Yale University '77 and Brown University Medical School '81. Medicine and neurology residencies in California and fellowship training in electroencephalography at the Montreal Neurological Institute, McGill University, followed.

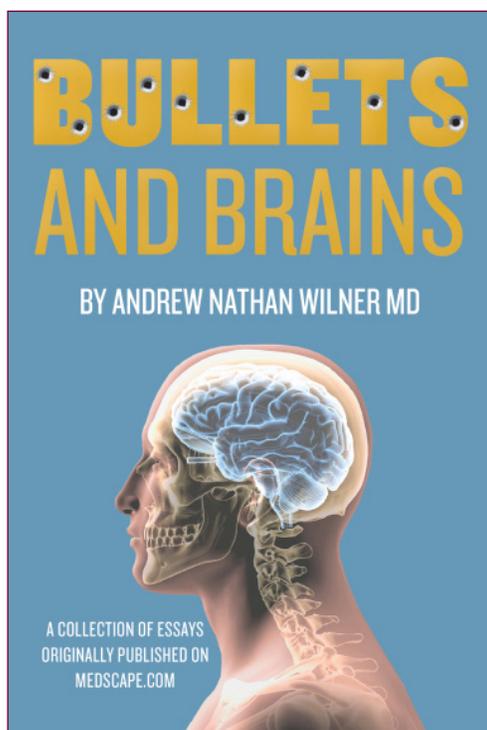
He joined the Brown neurology faculty and worked at Rhode Island Hospital for a short period of time, and has also held positions in North Carolina as a medical director of an epilepsy center and a clinic neurologist. In addition, he has worked as a neurohospitalist in Connecticut and on a *locum-tenens* basis.

An interest in nonfiction and medical writing led him to embark on a professional writing career, covering neurological topics for Medscape.com/neurology. He has also written two books on epilepsy for his patients: *Epilepsy in Clinical Practice* and *Epilepsy: 199 Answers (A Doctor Responds to His Patients' Questions)*.

In addition to writing, another of Dr. Wilner's passion is medical missionary work. While he began as a volunteer doing basic neurological work in the Philippines, he eventually became medical director of Lingkod Timog, a nonprofit medical mission organization that delivers health care to rural areas of that country.

<http://bulletsandbrains.net/video-book-trailer/>

<http://bulletsandbrains.net/chapter-one/>



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