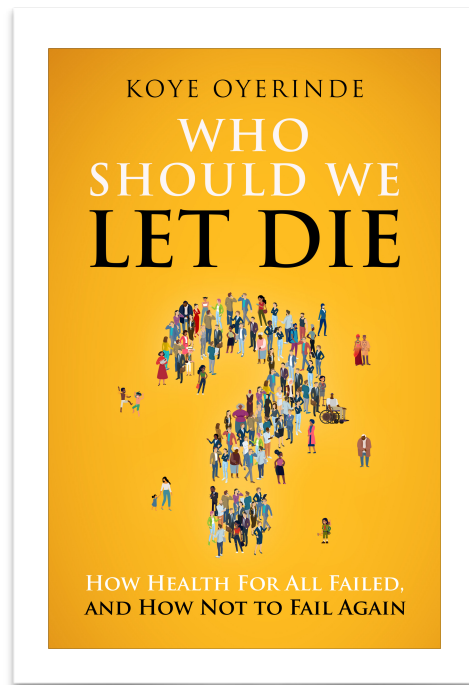




“Book Review: *Who Should We Let Die*”

Reviewed by Kathy L. Brown



Dr. Koye Oyerinde diagnoses the ills of healthcare systems around the world and recommends a treatment plan in this engaging treatise

Koye Oyerinde is a pediatrician who has practiced in developing nations and the United States for decades. As a public health professor, he advised the national health ministries of over thirty countries regarding maternal and child health services. Oyerinde is well positioned to see the systemic problems inherent in the structure of healthcare provision across diverse settings.



In a clear conversational voice, *Who Should We Let Die* breaks down public health policy and clinical medicine issues in an engaging manner that will make sense to healthcare consumers around the world. Given the global COVID-19 pandemic, the book's analysis of past pandemics, insights into the current one, and advice for the future are particularly pertinent. It helps that the book also acts as a fascinating memoir of Oyerinde's thirty years in healthcare.

The book grabs the reader with a story. In 1989 as a new house officer (medical school graduate in training at a teaching hospital), Oyerinde encountered a daunting set of challenges to save a street vendor's life.

Mama Jamila showed up in the emergency department of a Lagos megalopolis hospital, but without family or financial resources. This story illustrates the book's issues, from the dysfunctional medical supply system, to staffing drama, to the big one: money. Oyerinde recalls, **"I walked zombie-like for about ten minutes, not sure what to do. *But we can't just let her die was the recurring thought in my head.*"**

The 1978 Alma Ata Declaration's slogan, "Health for All by the Year 2000," promised that health is a human right and guided Oyerinde's medical training. Yet, that deadline has come and gone. A restated goal took the Alma Ata Declaration's place: Universal Health Coverage by 2030. **"The year 2030 is less than a decade away. Are we going to achieve universal health coverage? I don't know,"** says Oyerinde, **"but I am convinced that we have a fair chance."**

The book assesses the world's health status against these global objectives and, frankly—Dr. Oyerinde is always frank—the patient isn't looking well at all. **"If our governments do not provide for our basic health needs, can we really trust them with a serious public health crisis?"**

In addition to measuring society against the world's long-term health goals, the book also explores topics impacting community and individual health such as governments' obligations to their citizens; the civil rights issues at the heart of healthcare inequalities; healthcare workers' motivations, training, and rights; environmental pollution's impact on



health; technology's role in healthcare delivery, and effective measures against disease outbreak. As the book makes clear, all these issues, like health itself, are intertwined and global.

The book's voice is conversational and frequently illustrates a point with a vivid personal anecdote from the author's wide experience. It delivers complicated concepts and information with clarity, warmth, and humor.

Who Should We Let Die will provoke discussion among a general audience. It presents a healthcare practitioner's conclusions based on his personal experience and informed by his studies and research. The book calls on the reader to examine their values and think globally. The book's overriding point is that we are all interconnected, whether we realize it or not.

Readers interested in learning about people interacting with their healthcare systems in the United States, Africa, Asia, and Europe will enjoy this book. It provides much food for thought and should provoke lively discussion of healthcare policy, law, and regulation.