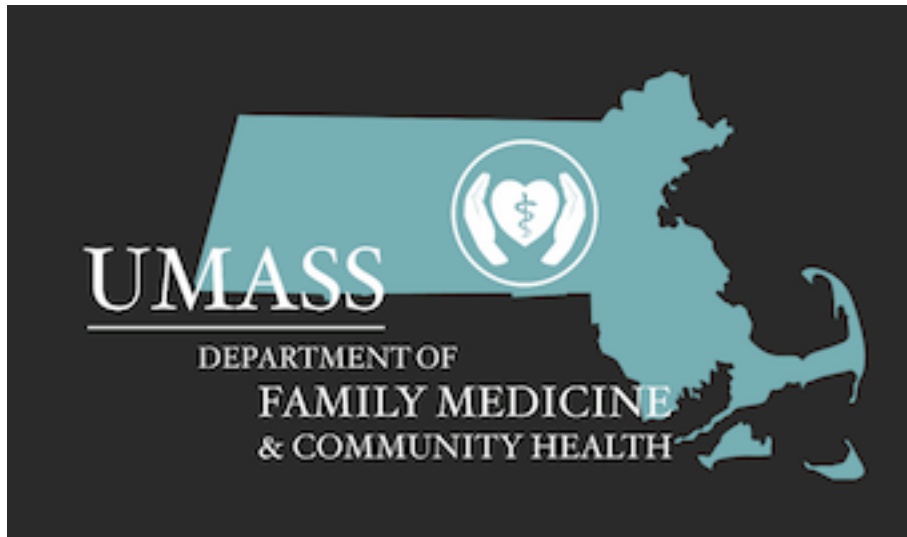


# eScholarship@UMassChan

## You Should Write a Book

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Item Type     | Prose   |
| Authors       | Ballard, Rebecca  |
| Publisher     | eScholarship@UMassChan  |
| Rights        | Copyright © 2023 Rebecca Ballard (Lubelczyk); Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International                   |
| Download date | 2024-12-21 11:29:59   |
| Item License  | <a href="http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/">http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/</a> |
| Link to Item  | <a href="https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14038/52301">https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14038/52301</a>           |



## Family Medicine Moments

May 4, 2023

Introduction: This week I share with you a reflection from Rebecca Ballard (Lubelczyk) who is the National Medical Director for Utilization Review for Centurion (a Correctional Medicine organization). We worked together in the state correctional health system years ago. Her piece reminds us of the uniqueness of being a health provider behind the walls and she reports on two books that might be of interest to readers about this topic.

### You Should Write a Book

By Rebecca Ballard

Those of us who take care of the justice-involved population hear that comment often in our professional careers. Either because of the unique clinical skills, managerial negotiation acumen, or “verbal jujitsu” that one must have to succeed as a correctional physician, or because of the unbelievable encounters we have often on a daily basis. Our friends, families, and colleagues are fascinated by what it must be like to be able to walk in, around, and out of a correctional facility. Most people want to know how we feel - scared, vulnerable, protected? Are there officers with us at all times? Outside the room? Down the hall? What are the patients like? Our significant others know all too well that we can sometimes be the most interesting person in the room at a social gathering.

Most desmoteric physicians and providers realized that our patients are patients - they are the same ones we see in our community clinics. The setting is just where we work, albeit with some added concrete and razor wire. It can be the most rewarding experience to take care of a patient who society, in general, has locked up and forgotten about. However, there are distinctions from behind the wall and beyond the wall that do deserve a book. Thankfully now, there are a couple.

Well, someone finally did what, at least for some of us, has been smoldering inside. Actually, two colleagues have done it. First, Dr. Jeff Keller has written an introductory textbook on correctional medicine. There are already a couple of textbooks on correctional medicine (shout out to Dr. Mike Puisis), but this one is written with the newly hired correctional provider in mind. This is the textbook that outlines how to succeed as a correctional physician. Dr. Keller imparts his knowledge from decades of personal experience to the reader, so that the new hire learning curve (that we all had to surmount with our first correctional job) is not so steep. Spoiler alert - this is part one. According to Dr. Keller, his publisher stated that the original manuscript was too long so part two will be coming out within the next year.

The second author I'd like to refer you to is Dr. Karen Gedney. She has written a book describing her personal experiences as a correctional physician. "30 Years Behind Bars – Trials of a Prison Doctor," published in 2018, is a memoir in which she shares her experiences working with confined patients.

As the back cover explains, "Karen Gedney is an internal medicine specialist who spent almost thirty years behind bars as a prison physician. She was designated as one of the best in the business by the American Correctional Association and won a "Heroes for Humanity Award" for her work in HIV in the correctional system. Her true stories document the journey of a naïve young physician who survived a world she was ill-prepared for and turned it into a calling."

I have read her book and, fair warning, she includes some harrowing moments. However, I highly encourage reading her inspiring work. Dr. Gedney's material may at times be too honest, even off putting for a fledgling correctional physician, but for those of us with at least a few months under our belts, it can inspire and can help create a sense of community in our unusual calling.

Keywords: correctional health, humanity, justice-involved