



# HEADS OR TAILS: A Physician's Journey from Doctor to Patient

*Joseph Varughese M.D.*

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## **HEADS OR TAILS: A Physician's Journey from Doctor to Patient** Joseph Varughese M.D.

Joseph Varughese's memoir is a poignant and moving read. His unusual upbringing, his calling to medicine, his faith and his courage in dealing with the illness that took his life are remarkable and instructive. I wish I had known him in life. -ABRAHAM VERGHESE, author of *Cutting for Stone* and *My Own Country AS A CHILD IN RURAL KERALA, SOUTH INDIA* Joseph Varughese slept on a dirt floor. He had no running water till he was 13 or television till 26. In this autobiography he traces his journey from a youngster in a lonely village to a respected physician in a glittering Western metropolis. He tells how he went from learning to write in grains of rice to mastering a rigorous medical curriculum in a near-foreign language. In the greatest twist, he changed from a doctor striding confidently down the hospital corridors to a patient covering his face as others wheeled him on a gurney. From watching leeches suck blood from his mother's veins as a child, he gazed mesmerized as stem cells were infused into him five decades later. From the most primitive form of treatment, he became the recipient of the greatest gifts of modern medicine. And after years of treating very sick people, he entered the patient's world himself and saw its full dimensions. This book embodies not just Joseph Varughese's intelligence and perceptiveness, but his feelings. The author catches the reader up in his emotions — his fear of the dark as a child, his agonies under chemotherapy, his love for his family, the resilient spirit with which he overcomes his disease twice. This is the universal story of an immigrant who came to the United States, the land of hope and opportunity, and fulfilled his dreams. It is a tale of heartbreak and triumph, of determination to beat back adversity and embrace life. Above all, it is a powerful lesson in overcoming life's challenges and reaching the pinnacle.

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