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Hunan Hand and Other Ailments: Letters to the New England Journal of Medicine

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From Little Brown Co : Hunan Hand and Other Ailments: Letters to the New England Journal of Medicine before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Hunan Hand and Other Ailments: Letters to the New England Journal of Medicine:

From Publishers WeeklyThis sampling of the medical journal's lighter correspondence of the past 20 years devotes a chapter to treating the physician's "acute case of jargon fever." Despite these good intentions, freelance medical writer Moskow offers many letters that suffer from untranslated "Medispeak" (a typical missive begins: "This summer and fall I had a rather stubborn lateral epicondylitis of my left elbow, and in turn a medial epicondylitis of my right elbow"). Diverse topics include the use of zippers in abdominal surgery; treatment of hiccups (a spoonful of sugar); the hazards of "Big Mac" allergy and handling hot peppers (Hunan hand); sports injuries (bicycle-handlebar palsy, frisbee finger, jogger's nipple and penile frostbite); atropine poisoning inferences in Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter; and sciatica resulting from carrying a credit-card stuffed wallet in the back pocket. A chapter on flatulence (with bedpan-

humor poems) or a letter detailing how a three-year-old contracted gonorrhea by eating a culture dish containing the organism will turn lay stomachs. Illustrations. Copyright 1987 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Chosen at least partly for their humor, these letters are organized under such topics as children, animals, occupational injuries, and medical fads. The chapter titles are either too cute or too crude ("Flatulence: intestinal fartitude") and few of the letters are genuinely amusing. Some of them are not understandable to the layperson without a medical vocabulary; some are all too understandable in their tastelessness. Since most of the letters are written by medical students and physicians, it's possible that this book will appeal to health professionals, but I wouldn't count on it. Anne Twitchell, EPA Headquarters Lib., Washington, D.C. Copyright 1987 Reed Business Information, Inc.