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# Laugh, Sing, And Eat Like A Pig: How An Empowered Patient Beat Stage IV Cancer (And What Healthcare Can Learn From It)



## Synopsis

"There's something in your lung." With those words Dave deBronkart began an unwanted odyssey: metastatic kidney cancer had spread silently throughout his body. Online, he read that his median survival time was 24 weeks. *Laugh, Sing and Eat Like a Pig* is Dave's story in his own words: excerpts from his cancer journal and later writings as he discovered the e-patient movement - "Empowered, Engaged, Equipped, Enabled" - and became its best-known blogger, speaker, and government policy advisor. The true story of "e-Patient Dave" will inspire you and fill you with a sense that a new world is beginning, a world in which empowered patients partner with medical professionals, to truly help heal healthcare.

## Book Information

Paperback: 260 pages

Publisher: Changing Outlook LLC (June 30, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0981650430

ISBN-13: 978-0981650432

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 17 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,818,892 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #45 in [Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Diseases & Physical Ailments > Cancer > Lung Cancer](#) #635 in [Books > Medical Books > Medicine > Doctor-Patient Relations](#)

## Customer Reviews

"There's something in your lung." With those words Dave deBronkart began an unwanted odyssey: he had metastatic kidney cancer, spread silently throughout his body. Online, he read that his median survival time was 24 weeks. *Laugh, Sing and Eat Like a Pig* is Dave's story in his own words: excerpts from his cancer journal and later writings as he discovered the e-patient movement - "Empowered, Engaged, Equipped, Enabled" - and became its best-known blogger, speaker, and government policy advisor. The true story of "e-Patient Dave" will inspire you and fill you with a sense that a new world is beginning, a world in which empowered patients partner with medical professionals, to truly help heal healthcare. Advance praise: "In my list of greatest personal reads." "Was it my cheering or tears, the intimacy of the story, the caring nature of the community,

the power of his vision, or just my awe of his guts? I suspect it was for all of those reasons and more that Dave's book now ranks in my list of greatest personal reads."-- James B. Conway, MS, FACHE, adjunct faculty member of the Harvard School of Public Health; Senior Fellow at the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI)"Listen up to e-Patient Dave. A must-read.""If you want to be an empowered patient - and you should - listen up to 'e-Patient Dave.' His lessons on participatory medicine can save your life just as I believe they saved his. Dave's story has inspired me, and I'm sure it will inspire you. Dave's a pioneer in the empowered patient movement, and Laugh, Sing, and Eat Like a Pig is a must-read for anyone who wants to take charge of their healthcare."-- Elizabeth Cohen MPH, CNN Senior Medical CorrespondentAuthor, The Empowered Patient (Random House)"Required reading for patients and doctors""Dave embodies the idea that the patient is the most underutilized resource in medicine. His spirit, wisdom, and fearlessness are contagious. This book is required reading for patients and doctors, to learn how we can work together to make health care better."-- Roni Zeiger, MD, Chief Health Strategist, Google"An enormous impact on medicine""There is no doubt that Dave has made an enormous impact on medicine. He has been featured in Time and US News, testified in Washington, DC and now his wisdom and advice are available in this book to anyone facing a serious disease."-- Kent Bottles, MD, President, Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement

"e-Patient Dave" deBronkart was diagnosed in 2007 with renal cell carcinoma (kidney cancer) at a very late stage. His median survival was just 24 weeks; with tumors in both lungs, several bones, even in muscle, his prognosis was "grim," as one web site put it. Online since 1989, Dave used every resource at his disposal: a strong mental attitude, online research, great treatment at Boston's Beth Israel Deaconess, online medical records, an online journal for family and friends, and online forum of kidney cancer patients. He beat the disease in less than a year, then discovered "e-patients," who participate actively in their healthcare. He began blogging as e-Patient Dave. An accomplished speaker and writer before his illness, today Dave is engaged in opening health information directly to patients, as public speaker, policy consultant, and Founding Co-chair of the Society for Participatory Medicine. He's testified in Washington, appeared in Time, US News & World Report, the Boston Globe, and was named to the HealthLeaders "20 People Who Make Healthcare Better." "This is the first time in my life I've felt I have a calling," says Dave, "something I can't get away from: it's what I need to do. I've had plenty of fulfilling jobs in a great career, but not a calling. This is it."

Why should a doctor read this book? You're a busy physician, and these patient self help books are all over the place. Why should you read this one? 1) It's a spectacular medical save. Any doctor reading this book will find renewed pride in our profession. We really ARE saving lives, even those on the very brink of death from formerly incurable disease. I felt good about that, and I guarantee you will, too. 2) You'll find out how your severely ill patients REALLY feel while you're treating them. Unlike most authors telling a story, Dave didn't know if he would live or die while writing the journal entries comprising most of this book. That brings with it a power and an immediacy absent in similar books. Consider: "Most of all, I cried out of knowing that when I go under anesthesia, there's nothing more I can do, and that's scary. Dr. Wagner's team is going to remove that cancerous kidney, and I'll have nothing to say or do until I wake up" (p. 28). It may be routine for us, but definitely not so for the patient. 3) You'll find out what you can do to help. First, read Paul Levy's introduction, "Yes, Patients CAN help their Doctors." Mr. Levy, CEO of the hospital where Dave was treated, explains how a simple attitude change on our part can improve our patient interactions to the benefit of both of us: "[Dave's] story is how doctors and a patient working in partnership can learn from one another." And Mr. Levy is not just pontificating from his C-suite - he served Dave his dinner one night, complete with hand-washing, apron and hairnet. Second; learn from the book and Dr. Danny Sands' introduction how you can discover and 'vet' the best websites for your patients, and enable them to both help themselves and help you. Dr. Sands' (Dave's primary care physician) prescription for Dave when they discovered he had stage 4 renal cancer? A slip of paper with "[...]" written on it. 4) You'll find out an 'e-patient' is not just going to bug you to death. A few quotes from the book should suffice here: "Yet a year ago I vowed to do everything I could to take responsibility for my own outcome." "...for every one-in-a-thousand disease, each physician has one or two patients! Who could keep up with the latest on every one-in-a-thousand disease?" "Reality is what it is, whether we know it or not; and regardless of what we think." Finally, I'll leave you with this: I saw on Dave's Facebook page that a patient was going to buy a copy of this book for his primary care doctor, who wasn't sure about this e-patient business. Don't you be that doctor. Beat 'em to it. You won't regret it.

The best writers make you feel like you're spending time with a wise friend -- add some tears and laughs and you have Dave's book (full disclosure: I do count myself as a friend of Dave's). I wasn't there for his whole journey, so I'm learning new things by reading about the scary, early days of diagnosis and treatment of his Stage IV cancer. And I love the chapter-by-chapter summary of Tom Ferguson's white paper. Tom posted only once to the [...] blog -- his blog -- before he died in 2006

and it was a tribute to The Voice of the Patient. When a group of us decided to complete the white paper and continue the blog in Tom's honor, Dave was not yet part of the group. Now Dave is not only part of the blog, but helped start the Society for Participatory Medicine and is a central figure in patient empowerment. Dave dedicates his book to Tom, writing: "I never met you, but you guide me every day." I bet there are people out in the world who would say the same thing about Dave, thanks to his writing -- on blogs, on Twitter, and now in this book. Dave is the embodiment of the voice of the patient. Listen and learn.

I was surprisingly captivated by 'Laugh, Sing, and Eat like a Pig.' I say "surprisingly" because I began reading knowing I have no medical expertise at all, so I expected to just read and comprehend what I could about a patient's first-hand experience battling against serious odds with Stage IV cancer. What I discovered was a truly amazing story, and an incredible road being traveled by this author. He's got lots of powerful messages and enlightening information that's not just for patients or medical experts, but for anyone who wants to take a look at "what is" and not just leave it at that because the experts have done studies that say so. Written in a blog style, you can't help but find yourself connected with this author and feeling as if you are right there along the journey with him. The whole concept of how the cancer metastasized in his femur, ulna, lungs, and even a strange experience with the tongue muscle was described in a way that it actually left an imprint in my mind. I found myself feeling the anxiety of his waiting, the frustrations he faced from the "silo effect" within the healthcare systems, all the physical, mental, and emotional challenges to get through the first round of treatments, anxieties of more waiting, the ups and downs of set backs, and then here we go again... round 2, but he did it all like a superstar! Despite ALL he's gone through, this author's humor is absolutely contagious! Humor combined with such a positive attitude and determination emanate. I'm enlightened by the e-patient movement, and now I want to find a PCP who strives towards participatory medicine. Once you read this book, you can't help but want to keep up with his blogs. Something tells me e-patient Dave is just getting started!

More than a cancer book. More than a journal of Dave's story. Help for all patients who are fighting for their lives or health. Dave's ideas and example are contagious. We can learn how to help ourselves and our loved ones to get what we need to fight any health condition. We can become partners by becoming "empowered" in our own care. We are all patients, but not all "empowered" and many may not know that we can be! But we can and this book will help inspire you to make that possible in your life. Looking for others who are reacting to this book? We are discussing it on a new

e-Patient page on the Rheumatoid Arthritis Warrior website (located at rawarrior dot com). Even though I have been working hard for a long time to find ways to learn about my treatment and to help other patients, I am learning so much from Dave's book. Maybe some of these things just needed to be said in print so that they could be taken seriously.

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