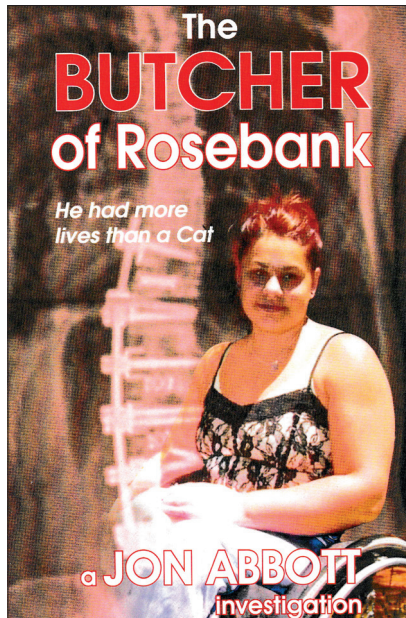


BOOK REVIEW



The Butcher of Rosebank: He had more lives than a cat

By Jon Abbott. South Africa: Digital Action, 2020. ISBN 978-0-620-89984-0

It is a deluge. We are swamped with reports in the media and published books about the nefarious activities of politicians and business people. Here Jon Abbott, an investigative journalist turned private eye, delves into the medical world and documents the gross malpractice of the former orthopaedic surgeon Wynne Lieberthal, who died in 2016 aged 61 years.

Through following up records and numerous interviews with patients and other players, Abbott provides comprehensive coverage of an affair that was much more than grossly mismanaged surgery and awful outcomes for numerous patients. It is a sad story of a talented doctor whose early career was full of promise (and there were glowing reports from the small town where he finally practised as a GP). Early on Lieberthal, medical colleagues and others together with a

rogue insurance broker teamed up to benefit from fraudulent 'dread disease' medical claims. His substance misuse and dishonesty, and especially his uncaring exploitation of vulnerable patients, are covered in detail. The complaint of Lieberthal's considerable overcharging for devices used in his surgical procedures and obtained from his own company has languished for many years in police files.

The role of the Health Professions Council of South Africa in this affair comes in for much criticism. It was the radio station 702 and newspapers that brought Lieberthal's misdeeds to the attention of the public.

This is a self-published book. Minor typographical and other errors would have benefited from a thorough editing. It is a useful documentation of some of the dark sides of medical practice and its regulation.

The book is available from the author (dearjon@webafrica.org.za). The price is R250.

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