



The Hospital by the River

Catherine Hamlin , John Little

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) ➔

The Hospital by the River

Catherine Hamlin , John Little

The Hospital by the River Catherine Hamlin , John Little

When gynecologists Catherine and Reg Hamlin left their home in Australia for Ethiopia, they never dreamed that they would establish what has been heralded as one of the most incredible medical programs in the modern world. But more than forty years later, the couple has operated on more than 20,000 women, most of whom suffer from obstetric fistula, a debilitating childbirth injury. In this awe-inspiring book, Dr. Catherine Hamlin recalls her life and career in Ethiopia. Her unyielding courage and solid faith will astound Christians worldwide as she talks about the people she has grown to love and the hospital that so many Ethiopian women have come to depend on. She truly is the Mother Teresa of our age.

The Hospital by the River Details

Date : Published March 3rd 2005 by Monarch Books (first published January 1st 2001)

ISBN : 9780825460715

Author : Catherine Hamlin , John Little

Format : Paperback 308 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Cultural, Africa, Autobiography, Memoir, Biography, Medical, Health, Medicine, Eastern Africa, Ethiopia

 [Download The Hospital by the River ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Hospital by the River ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online The Hospital by the River Catherine Hamlin , John Little

From Reader Review The Hospital by the River for online ebook

Lisa says

Let me get this part out of the way first - this was not a well-written book. Unfortunately. It could have been so much better. So much more could have been added into it. And I wish it had.

This book is about the fistula hospital in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The one that Abraham Verghese based the fistula department at Missing Hospital on in his book. How do I know this? I read the acknowledgements at the end of "Cutting For Stone" and he mentioned this book.

The story follows Reg and Catherine Hamlin, both ob/gyns, their life in Ethiopia, and how they came about beginning the Fistula Hospital In Addis Ababa. It is truly an inspiring story which brings in the history of Ethiopia - revolutions, emperors, etc - along with the life of the Hamlins. That is all fine and dandy, but the book would begin one topic and suddenly switch to another. It didn't flow very well and devote its time to the fistula hospital. I feel it didn't go into the story of the fistula pilgrims and their plight enough.

I have to admire both Hamlins. What they have done is an incredible endeavor, one that I wish I would have the guts to do - to help people no matter the cost, the inconvenience, the distance from family. These women - and they are in the thousands - go through something our western society could not even imagine. Days of labor with no help, squatting in a dirt floored hut with no clean water. The baby dies unable to be delivered and the woman (or young girl) is left for a lifetime of being ostracized because of her smell, no control of her bodily functions, her husband has left her, and she is left to beg and live a life alone. Being cured by the surgery that the Hamlins have pioneered makes their lives, in three short weeks, totally change. They become beautiful again and a member of society. What is sad, is that there are so many more women going through this horrible injury even today.

The story itself is such a worthwhile one to know. I only wish that this book had been better written.

Emily Wrayburn says

Review originally posted on A Keyboard and an Open Mind 29 January 2018:

The quote at the top of this review is not one from the book, as I usually do with reviews. Actually, I forgot to bookmark any. The quote is something Dr Hamlin's son, Richard, said at her 90th birthday party, and it is absolutely true.

In 1959, Reg and Catherine Hamlin arrived in Ethiopia with the six-year-old son to being an OB/GYN and midwifery school in Addis Ababa. After realising the sheer numbers of women in Ethiopia who suffer from a traumatic childbirth-related injury, obstetric fistula, the Hamlins made it their life's work to cure as many women as possible. This led to the opening of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, which has now been operating for nearly 50 years.

I have to admit that there were times when this book challenged me a bit. In terms of personal values, Catherine and I are quite different. What I perceive as the great social movements of the 60s, Catherine viewed as degeneracy and worried for her son, whom she expected would finish his schooling in England. Catherine, a staunch Christian, does not believe in abortion; I do (and I'm rather of the opinion that religious beliefs shouldn't get in the way of your medical profession). And yet, the great work that the Hamlins have

done in Ethiopia tends to outweigh all of that, proving that someone can have different values to you and still be a wonderful person.

It was quite fascinating to also learn about medical history, particularly the evolution of the fistula repair surgery, as well as the history of Ethiopia. I had no idea that Sylvia Pankhurst, daughter of famed suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst, had spent much of her life campaigning for women in Ethiopia.

Some of the writing of the book seemed a bit choppy. It felt as though all the chapters had been written in isolation to one another, and that no one had tidied them up later. A medical procedure would be described in detail in one chapter, and then described again almost verbatim later. There were other smaller statements that would also feel a tad repetitive throughout the book. It also bothered me that there wasn't any consistency regarding the plural of fistula: both fistulas and fistulae got used. I'm not sure if there was a reason for that; if so, it wasn't explained and it felt a bit choppy.

Still, if you can put up with that, and are interested in any of the subject matter, then there's a very good chance you will enjoy this book.

Jeanette says

Wonderful and inspiring book about Catherine and her husband Reginald Hamlin's dedication to helping fistula patients around the world.

When Catherine and Reg arrived in Ethiopia for a three year stint – to be employed as obstetricians-gynaecologists by the Ethiopian Ministry of Health at the Princess Tsehai Memorial Hospital in Addis, they had no idea they were about to embark on their life's work - the treatment and prevention of fistula caused by obstructed labour. In rural Ethiopia and in much of Africa and South Asia, young women (often still children or 13 or 14) give birth without midwives or doctors. Obstructed labours lasting 4 - 5 days result in a dead and decomposing stillborn child and the pressure of the head breaks down the tissues between the vagina and the bladder and/or bowel - with resulting in constant and unrelenting incontinence, abandonment, isolation and poverty – for years and even decades. It was the plight of these women that inspired Catherine and Reg to learn how to repair the injuries (often seen as unrepairable), to establish a special hospital for the 'fistula pilgrims', to provide futures for the women and to train nurses, doctors and midwives.

In *The Hospital by the River* Catherine (with John Little) tells her and Reg's story, which is also the story of Ethiopia, the Hospital, and the Fistula pilgrims. The story rarely gets bogged down and is full of gripping stories, exciting events and inspiring vision and often brings a tear to the eyes.

The book finishes about 2000 (a few years after Reg's death), with Catherine still in Ethiopia at 77 years old. She was still there fourteen years later in 2014 <http://www.smh.com.au/national/cather...> and indeed to this day (2017)- a mighty woman inspired by her faith and compassion.

Sara says

Read this. Just do it. Amazing autobiography of Christian missionaries saving the lives of women all over Ethiopia.

Diane says

Very good book about Catherine and Reg Hamlin, and their work in Ethiopia providing surgery for women who suffer from obstetric fistula. What a horrible condition. What wonderful people to devote themselves to helping.

3 Stars = I liked the book. I'm glad I read it.

Kim Tyo-Dickerson says

From the Hamlin Fistula Hospital's website. You need to know what a fistula is to appreciate the work of Catherine Hamlin and her husband Reg in Ethiopia:

"Pregnant women in rural Ethiopia have little or no access to emergency obstetric services. If they are among the five percent of women worldwide who will face obstructed labour, they will be in agonising labour for days and days.

They almost always lose their baby and suffer horrific internal damage – sometimes the bladder is completely destroyed, sometimes the rectum is also damaged. They leak constantly and are pushed to the edge of their society, too filthy to be part of village life and considered a curse.

"I would rather have my arm cut off than live with this condition." Yenenesh, aged 17.

=

- See more at: <http://hamlin.org.au/#sthash.5WoCY4zd...>

A worthier cause or a more inspiring life story is hard to find. The Hamlin's work on behalf of the women and girls of Ethiopia has been unceasing and revolutionary. Read Catherine's memoir and find ways today to become involved in their life and spirit saving work.

Liralen says

Although the writing doesn't really do it justice, this story covers *such* a fascinating topic and admirable story. I had some trouble with the structure that I suspect could have been solved by making this a memoir rather than an autobiography -- it's a lot less interesting to hear about the author's parents and grandparents, and *their* missionary work, than it is to hear about the work the author's work in Ethiopia. The longer the period that a book aims to cover, the less depth it can go into in any given part of that period, and we see that here -- patients whose cases are described as especially unique, or workers at the hospital, are introduced in a paragraph or two and then never mentioned again. Outside the author's immediate family and the hospital structure itself, there isn't a great deal of continuity.

None of that, I will note, detracts from the impressive work they did (and that the author still does). I am not interested in their missionary agenda, but (luckily for me) the book is relatively subdued on that end. It does occasionally get a bit more political than I would have preferred (and I never quite figured out why she finds birth control to be useless in terms of helping young patients avoid fistulae; I understand that the ability to

have children is *hugely* important in that part of the world, and that the patients they treat have already gotten pregnant and so on, but -- isn't there something to be said for preventive care? If girls not only married older -- as she recommends -- but had access to birth control, they might be less likely to get pregnant before their bodies were ready).

Oops, now I'm falling into the political, or at least the ideological.

Anyway. I struggled at first with the heavy emphasis on their social life -- descriptions of people they knew, various princesses, et cetera. It ended up making a great deal of sense in the long run, given the events of the 70s and Selassie's deposal and so on, but the hospital is the real star of the show here. (There were some little -- unintentionally funny? -- gems, such as 'Another question that caused great anxiety was that the Duke wanted thrones for the evening dinner party and the Queen did not. The Queen eventually had her way' (page 134), but I have to say that I would have taken more detailed descriptions of the patients and their learning curve and so on over attention to their -- admittedly rich -- social lives.)

(While I'm at it: I did find her surprise at the lavishness of the American lifestyle to be quite funny -- not that the average American standard of living isn't very different than the average Ethiopian standard of living, but of *course* the people she were visiting had particular wealth; she was fundraising!)

Anyway, anyway. I knew about fistulae but not exactly how they were caused, and in terms of educating me a bit this helped a great deal. I loved reading about the patients -- the particular problems they faced, the way some of them ended up working at the hospital, the lengths to which they had to go to get treatment. Take the woman who spent seven years begging before she could get bus fare to get to the hospital. *Seven years*. Focusing more on these stories, and on fuller pictures of the women involved -- or perhaps walking through, in detail, one woman's time at the hospital -- would have made this a stronger book, but it's still an impressive story.

Kathryn says

I read this shortly after it was released nearly 13 years ago. I was overwhelmed and amazed at the suffering of the women not just their physical issues but the treatment they received by their community and family of total ostracism. As they found hope with a relatively simple surgery done by loving medical providers at no cost. The medical team did this as an act of love. Their intention to demonstrate to those suffering that a loving God wanted them healed.

There were many times I cried while reading. I am not talking a tear or two. These women had no hope. The surgery changed not only how others saw them but how they saw themselves. '

If you want to read a book that will lift you up and encourage you, this will do it.

Paula says

Awe inspiring. This is an autobiography that has changed my outlook on life and made me look both inwards and ponder the larger questions in life.

Dr Catherine Hamlin has dedicated her life to restoring dignity to women who have borne more shame, pain and injustice than most of us can contemplate.

Her writing style is not close to being as engaging as her story is. She tells it simply, just as it is. Her life work is in Ethiopia, healing fistula patients, women who are incontinent of urine and faeces following birth trauma.

This is birth trauma that can only take place in a developing country. Think 3 - 7 days of labour, delivery of a dead baby usually before the age of 15 and in the countryside, several days walk from a road.

I had watched the award winning documentary "A Walk to Beautiful" on pbs.org -

<http://video.pbs.org/video/980049841/>

then I read everything online I could about Dr Hamlin while I waited for the book.

Kate Hilly says

An amazing life lived to help others. Loved reading of the early years of this pioneering couple of surgeons who have changed countless lives in their work. Their love of Africa and its people shines through.

Ellen Fraser-Barbour says

I tend to avoid writing reviews, but this book is deserving of every star and review.

I first read this book when I was 14, and I was riveted from the first page. I became immersed, eager to know more about the lives of gynaecologists Catherine and Reg Hamlin. Catherine and Reg moved their (very) young children to Ethiopia, to build a hospital. They moved heaven and earth, giving their lives to women suffering from fistula. Often these women experienced traumatic childbirth which went terribly wrong, they were shunned to live in isolated huts; dirty, incontinent, soiled, severely damaged physically and emotionally.

Although this story is always written from Catherine and Reg's perspective, there are many individual stories of the women who passed through their hospital and became a part of Catherine and Reg's life, which are woven through too.

As we follow Catherine and Reg through their journey, we are offered a unique insight into the social, political, cultural religious experience of living in Ethiopia. I tend to avoid stories where religion is at the centre of the story teller's life, but in this case it only added to the richness of the story's fabric. At times, Catherine and Reg faced confrontation, conflict, and violence and I often had to put the book down and wait until morning for fear of nightmares. But Catherine and Reg share with us many moments of hope, celebration, joy and love too. I think that was why I was able to finish the book.

When I finished the last word in this book, I remember feeling like my life was incredibly small and pathetic in comparison to the magnitude of Catherine and Reg's life. I remember thinking; "I wish I could meet Catherine and Reg. I wish I could hug them and thank them. I wish I could have their intelligence, training and skill to use for the welfare of others, and I most certainly wish I had Catherine and Reg's unselfish courage."

Catherine and Reg's story has remained with me, and it is my most treasured book in my bookcase. I recently picked it up again and re-read it (now in my early 20s) wondering if I would have a different reaction to it. The story is just as profound today, as it was several years ago. It is a genuine, honest, awe-inspiring story written by awe-inspiring people. I recommend it to whom-ever I can!

Kathy says

Catherine Hamlin is an inspirational woman. Her work has saved thousands of lives, and made life worth living for thousands of women.

Unfortunately, she doesn't bring the same skill and inspiration to her writing as she does to her medical work. Her magnificent story is told in a flat, uninteresting way, more of a straight narrative of facts.

Normally, this would be a big negative for me, but I felt that the work Dr Hamlin was describing, and its impact on the lives of the women she was working with in Ethiopia was so brilliant and visionary that the book made for a fascinating read.

I found this book enjoyable, educational and humbling. The writing wasn't the greatest, but that became only a secondary issue in the story of this woman's great work.

Deborah says

What I love about this book is its story of transformation. It is only near the end of the book that Catherine Hamlin refers to the fistula patients as butterflies emerging from the chrysalis, but the stories from beginning to end are each as beautiful as the other. Hopelessness transformed into hope. Sadness to joy. Shame to dignity. Tears to beaming smiles. Rags to dresses. It is simply breathtaking. The same story over and over, and yet poignant every time with each new individual patient.

What I also love about this book is how it reveals God's sovereignty. To read someone's entire life story from cover to cover displays the woven thread of God's master plan. He chooses one life. To that life He adds experience. He adds relationship. He adds joy and tragedy. Each and every part enhances His matchless creative work in loving His children and bringing due glory to Himself. It has been an extraordinary privilege to read this book and I hope to somehow carry on the legacy of a life fully devoted to God.

Jennifer says

The story is inspirational. The story-TELLING was so poor. Bless her heart, the woman running the hospital is a hero, truly she is. But she rambles like my grandmother, unfortunately, and her editor/ghost writer did nothing to help! It could have been a fantastic book, because it is truly a fantastic story. She has lived an incredibly adventurous life doing so much wonderful good in this world. She is a light in a dark place, and so is this little hospital! She has trained all these wonderful women who have risen above their odds to save the lives of the poor and needy around them, giving new life and hope to those who are unloved, unnoticed, and uncared for. They have changed their little corner of the world and they inspire others to do the same, never looking inward or expecting a thing. Such humility and hard work is worth noticing, worth emulating. So much hope from such an unexpected place! But the book, unfortunately, does not do the life there its justice. Such a shame!

Kass says

Just Wow!! What an amazing couple. The stories of the Ethiopian women both break your heart and humble you through their incredible resilience and dignity under such horrendous conditions.
