



# Patient Safety America Newsletter

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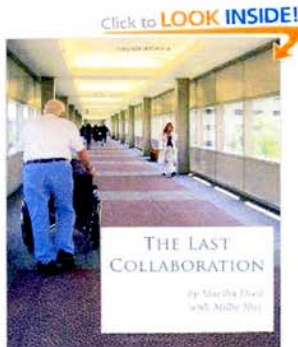
**Question:** Medical guidelines published repeatedly since 1996 recommend against screening for ovarian cancer in low-risk women because the potential harm outweighs the benefit. What percentage of primary care physicians would offer this screening to their patients anyway? a) 5 b) 10 c) 20 d) 30 e) 40

## Review: **The Last Collaboration**

By Martha Deed with Millie Niss

This book cuts deeply into one of the worst events life can hand you – the loss of a child. I have been there and I understand why Ms. Deed had to tell the story of her daughter's often inept medical care. Millie Niss, a talented artist and well-educated young woman, died at the age of 36 after suffering for years with the consequences of Behcet's Disease and later Cushing Syndrome. These diseases led her into morbid obesity and multiple hospitalizations in New York State before she died of an undiagnosed spinal infection in 2009.

Although the pathway Millie took to death was much more convoluted than the one my 19-year old son took in 2002, the milestones are familiar to me. There is sudden bad news, there is fear – fear that the parent did not do all things the parent could – fear of speaking up to “authority.” There is arrogance in some providers, illegible records, cover ups, blaming the patient and, finally, learning things you wish you never found out. There is looking back to the good days when death was not on the doorstep of your child and, at the end, profound grief when the “miracle” of death forever tears your heart. The experience Ms. Deed gives the reader is emotional and it is poetry.



Ms. Deed weaves together a tapestry of words - some by her, some by Millie, and some by those who would heal Millie. This is medical misadventure laced with anguished prose and cries for help. The collaboration between mother and daughter is deeply personal and worth experiencing for yourself. You might ask, “Why is that experience so important to me since I do not plan to lose a child to poor-quality medical care?”

What you must understand is that many of us, perhaps most of us, will experience a journey not unlike the one Millie took before death gave her peace. The hyper-interventions and missed communications of the medical industry in the last months of life are not uncommon when a host of acute and chronic illnesses overtake the patient. Some of this, of course, is our fault as patients who never thought to declare our will not to be over treated. By reading this unusual book you will become a much wiser patient, presumably better prepared to deal with the complex hospital environment when your turn comes to do battle with life-threatening disease.

Ms. Deed's story of collaboration does not end with

Millie's death. There are the futile attempts to gain accountability and fix the medical system that ushered Millie from life. Alas, there will be no justice...but there is a grave in Quaker Cemetery in Brooklyn from which Millie speaks back to us through her witness in this book. Hear her words and wisdom. Amazon.UK. £11.50. 4 ½ stars  
Available on Amazon.com for \$18.