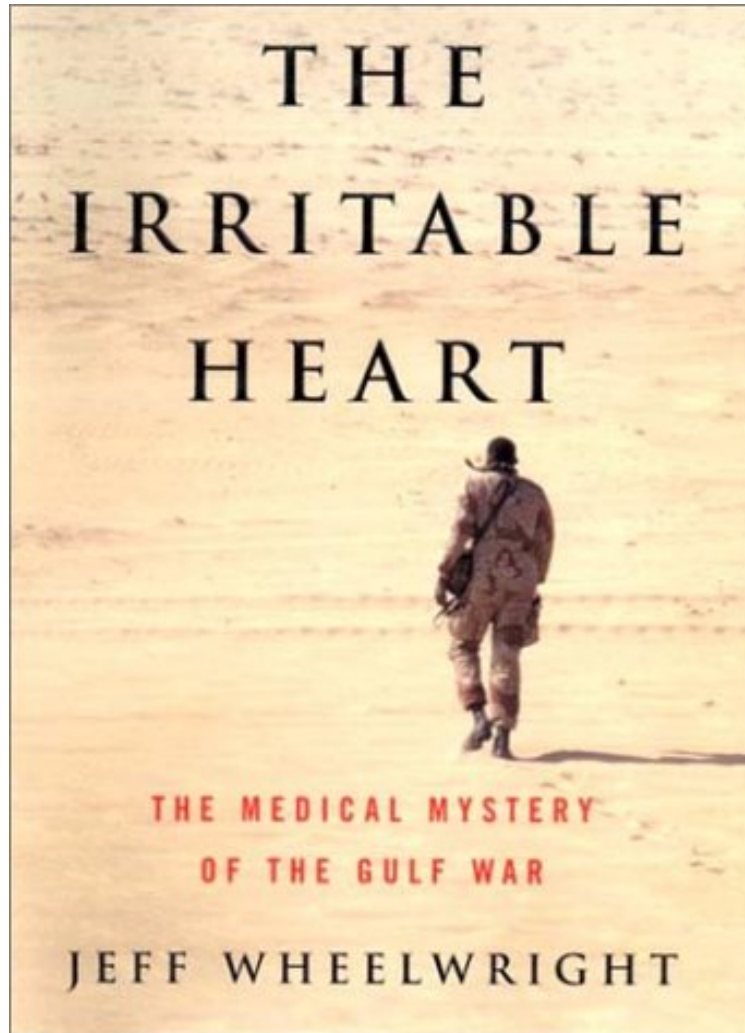


The Irritable Heart: The Medical Mystery of the Gulf War

Jeff Wheelwright

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Jeff Wheelwright : The Irritable Heart: The Medical Mystery of the Gulf War before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Irritable Heart: The Medical Mystery of the Gulf War:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. This book is much like the "The Gulf War Syndrome" It gives stories as ...By Matthew Steele DowThis book is much like the "The Gulf War Syndrome" It gives stories as well. Some will break your heart. It has been, and still is a struggle. I seem to be in the "Gulf" every day of my life. I would be happy to have it all behind me, but it may be with me till I die? I have a strong belief in God, and Jesus as my personal Lord and Saviour. He is the only one who helps me through each and every day. I really recomend this book. I have both, a d they are good. MSG Retired Matthew Dow/Disabled.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

The Irritable Heart By Country I believe this book captures the heart of our VA, the problems and the need of help our Vets require. All though this book follows 4 Individuals it is told in a way that not just my self as a vet but anyone that has experienced similar situations can relate to. Hopefully this book can give some insight in helping others as it has with me. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Michael Sweers quick shipping, packed well, as described, thumbs up!

If oil, smoke, and nerve gas didn't cause Gulf War Syndrome, what did? Following the 1991 Persian Gulf War, thousands of U.S. military veterans developed illnesses that medical science was unable to understand. Ten years later many veterans remain sick, and doctors still cannot agree on the cause. In *The Irritable Heart* Jeff Wheelwright profiles five ailing veterans, unraveling the health mystery through their intimate and fascinating case histories. He describes the veterans' experiences, beginning with their deployment to the Gulf and tracking them through their return, their mysterious suffering, and their struggles to find the reasons for their illnesses. Drawing on his experiences as a reporter in the Gulf in 1991, he reviews the toxic substances in the environment, such as oil smoke and nerve gas, that many believe to be the cause of the conditions. Wheelwright demonstrates why such scenarios are unlikely. Rather, he shows that the gulf war illnesses belong in the company of chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, and multiple chemical sensitivity symptom complexes that are increasing in America and evading a biomedical explanation. Although these contemporary illnesses are unrelated to war, Wheelwright points out that the gulf war ills have their own precedents in military history as far back as a Civil War malady known as "irritable heart." Doubters have dismissed the veterans' conditions as a psychological fabrication "It's all in their heads." Wheelwright maintains that gulf war syndrome is a real illness, involving both the body and the mind. It consists of physical symptoms greatly magnified and aggravated by psychological distress. But because modern medicine deals with the body and mind separately, the health investigation of the veterans' illnesses was bound to fail, leading to a bitter political polarization over the cause. Wheelwright puts us in the thick of the controversy one that both obscured the medical inquiry and slighted the suffering of the veterans. The only way to understand these elusive sicknesses is to consider the mind and body as one suffering system. With profound insight, *The Irritable Heart* takes the subject of chronic illness far beyond the medical aftermath of a desert war.

.com Though the merits of the 1991 gulf war will no doubt be debated as long as there are politicians and historians, it might turn out to have made a significant contribution to the development of medicine. Thousands of veterans suffer from a nebulous constellation of ailments commonly referred to as Gulf War Syndrome (GWS), and they are pushing the fledgling field of psychoneuroimmunology to the forefront of research interest. Science journalist Jeff Wheelwright explores this unfamiliar territory through interviews with ailing veterans and their physicians, as well as larger-scale reporting from Congressional and military reports in *The Irritable Heart*. Familiar with the Persian Gulf region through his environmental coverage before and during the war, he is savvy enough to check claims of toxicity while retaining a healthy yet sympathetic skepticism. The veterans' stories are tragic, frustrating, and disturbing; their drive to at least name, if not cure, their problem stymied by a wall of institutional ignorance. Seemingly related to other medical mysteries like Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Multiple Chemical Sensitivity, and fibromyalgia, GWS has helped launch research into the connections between the mind, the brain, and the immune system. Whether advances will come in time to help sufferers is an open question, but at least it is finally being asked. --Rob Lightner From Publishers Weekly Gulf War syndrome is a vague diagnosis for such symptoms as diarrhea, headaches, muscle pain, fatigue, shortness of breath and irregular heart rhythm (the eponymous "irritable heart"). Causes of the syndrome have been variously cited as exposure to chemical weapons, nerve gas and fuel oil fumes, but, as Wheelwright explains, the same symptoms could also be the result of chronic fatigue syndrome, multiple chemical sensitivity or fibromyalgia. Wheelwright, former science editor of *Life* magazine and author of *Degrees of Disaster*, gathers epidemiological evidence and personal histories to argue that modern medicine lacks the wisdom and skills to understand Gulf War syndrome because medical experts look at physical symptoms separately from emotional symptoms. For example, when Carol Best returned from the war, she began to experience, among other symptoms, frequent asthma attacks that were similar to those brought on before the war by her exposure to chemicals in the printing shop where she had worked. Best wonders if her stint in the Gulf is responsible for her poor health, but, argues the author, she never considers that going through a divorce could be a possible contributing factor, and, in the end, the doctors are unable to pinpoint the source of her illness. Wheelwright assumes a self-conscious and patronizing posture ("I have an agenda for Carol, and I must push ahead with it"), but his argument that modern medicine must adopt a more holistic approach as it confronts new medical mysteries is a clarion call to medical professionals and laypersons concerned about the state of health in contemporary society. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From *Library Journal* War-related illnesses continue to mystify patients, doctors, and political activists. Science journalist Wheelwright (*Degrees of Disaster*) begins with the story of "irritable heart" conditions suffered by Civil War veterans. He then illustrates the similarities in the conditions of Gulf War veterans who struggle to get affirmation and compensation for the very real but difficult-to-diagnose symptoms encountered following their experiences. Are the symptoms related to toxic

exposures in the Gulf? Are they psychological responses to war-related stress, or is the illness a combination of physical and mental reactions? If the syndrome cannot be accurately identified, how can it be effectively treated? While answers to these questions remain mostly unanswered, Wheelwright's in-depth research and his interviews with Gulf War veterans serve to humanize the political and medical issues surrounding this controversy, while providing a great deal of food for thought. Recommended for public libraries. Tina Neville, Univ. of South Florida at St. Petersburg Lib. Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.