

50 Years in Family Medicine

Rashmi Rode, MD

AUTHOR AFFILIATION:

Department of Family and Community Medicine, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, TX

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

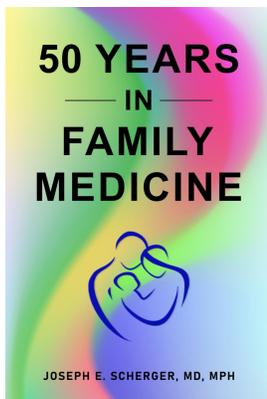
Rashmi Rode, Department of Family and Community Medicine, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, TX, rode@bcm.edu

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Book Title: 50 Years in Family Medicine

Author: Joseph E. Scherger, MD, MPH

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In a time of high-tech advances, precision medicine, and fragmented care, *50 Years in Family Medicine* by Dr Joseph Scherger is not just a personal memoir, but a timely reflection on the evolution of family medicine. It serves as a poignant reminder of the enduring human connection at the heart of primary care, a theme that resonates in today's rapidly changing medical landscape. Scherger, a clinical professor of family medicine at the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California, past president of the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine, practicing family physician, educator, and health system innovator, distills his 5 decades of experience into a series of succinct, thoughtful essays chronicling his journey and the discipline's transformation.

The book begins in the formative years of the specialty, when family medicine was still gaining formal recognition. Scherger shares stories from his career—clinical cases, academic moments, and health system changes—blending his personal and professional growth. From early on, his focus on community care and the biopsychosocial model shapes his belief that strong relationships, continuity, and prevention should be the foundation of health care.

Scherger brings the reader into his world, sharing stories of mentoring residents, advocating for patient-centered medical homes, and championing lifestyle medicine. His commitment to prevention and wellness, particularly in later years, reflects a pivot from reactive treatment to proactive health—a shift many in primary care now embrace. There is a candid reckoning with the administrative burdens that erode the sanctity of the doctor-patient relationship, yet his tone remains solution-oriented rather than cynical. He positions the family physician not as a passive actor in a strained system, but as a catalyst for reform and healing.

The book also succeeds in conveying the emotional cadence of a medical career. Scherger's reflections on burnout, life changes, and finding purpose in medicine are not just honest, but deeply relatable. His candid discussions about spirituality, mindfulness, and midcareer renewal add a layer of depth to a narrative that's often centered just on clinical or academic achievements.

Written in an expository yet personal style, the chapters are short and digestible, making the book accessible to a broad audience—from medical students to seasoned clinicians. Scherger's prose carries the quiet authority of lived experience, balanced with humility. There are valuable takeaways on leadership, patient communication, and system redesign, all shared without dogma.

However, the book does have some limitations. Readers seeking a deeper understanding of issues such as health disparities, social factors influencing care, or problems within the health care system may find that these topics remain untapped and await discovery. Other topics are also lightly touched upon, such as health policy reform, the impact of technology on practice, or how professionalism is changing in the digital age. While Scherger acknowledges the larger forces that shape health care, his primary focus stays within the boundaries of his own professional and personal journey. His stories give the book a clear and consistent voice, but at times can feel limited to his point of view. Including more perspectives—from patients, communities, or other health care professionals—could have added depth and made the narrative more well-rounded.

Despite its limits, *50 Years in Family Medicine* is a thoughtful and heartfelt book. It invites readers to pause, reflect, and reconnect with the core values that first inspired many to choose family medicine. In an age when metrics often overshadow meaning, Scherger's voice reminds us that healing is still relational and that the heart of medicine beats strongest in long-term, person-centered care. Reading this book has the potential to significantly impact your perspective and practice, making it a valuable read for medical students, family physicians, health care professionals, and medical educators alike.

For family medicine clinical educators, the book offers a valuable resource for teaching professionalism, vocation, and career sustainability. For students and residents, it provides an honest window into the rewards and challenges of a life in primary care. And for those who have practiced for decades, it offers both nostalgia and renewed inspiration.

In the end, *50 Years in Family Medicine* is not just Scherger's story. It is a mirror in which many family physicians, like me, will see reflections of their paths, struggles, and hopes for the future of the specialty.