

BOOK REVIEW

Bone on Bone: An Orthopedic Surgeon's Guide to Avoiding Surgery and Healing Pain Naturally

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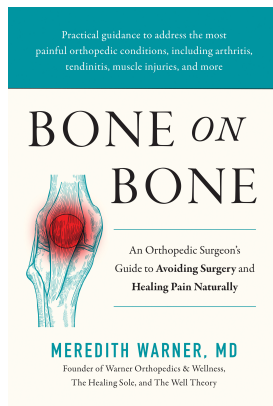
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Book Title: Bone on Bone: An Orthopedic Surgeon's Guide to Avoiding Surgery and Healing Pain Naturally

Author: Meredith Warner, MD

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Meredith Warner, MD, is an orthopedic surgeon with an orthopedics and wellness practice in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. While she teaches at Louisiana State University, her practice is highly atypical for an orthopedic surgeon. Applying the methods of lifestyle medicine and nutritional healing, she works hard to help patients avoid surgery and regain their health and wellness. She believes that the orthopedic community is “out of alignment” (p.1) and too much surgery is being done. Most family physicians know this, but Dr Warner provides numerous examples from the perspective of an orthopedic surgeon of such ubiquitous problems as low back pain and osteoarthritis. Her emphasis is on prevention and through good advice on the care of our bones and joints, she believes she has prevented many patients from needing surgery.

The strongest and most memorable part of this book is the author's account of how MRI findings are misleading and often do not point to the need for surgery, despite the results. She states that most orthopedic surgeons consider the MRI findings as the objective part of the evaluation and use the findings to guide surgical decisions. This passage typifies her advice to the reader and her patients:

“...MRI studies of large groups of people show abnormalities in the cervical spine, lumbar spine, knee, hip, and shoulder in the same patient! The “defect” that your surgeon found on your MRI and said should be fixed is probably on the MRI scans of countless people with no pain or symptoms as all. To be clear, millions of people are walking around with rotator cuff tears, arthritis, or a torn meniscus of the knee – but they have no pain. They're enjoying full normal function.”

—(p. 8, references are provided)

Bone on Bone is well organized in providing detailed information about diet, natural treatments, and alternative methods to protect and heal the body. Dr Warner describes her “Well Theory” of healthy lifestyle practices and a positive mindset. She promotes appropriate exercise for any age and orthopedic condition, optimizing diet to reduce inflammation, and restful sleep to restore and repair in the musculoskeletal system.

The book is written for an audience of patients interested in exploring alternatives to surgery for orthopedic problems. Not all the proposed alternatives are supported by solid science, such as a long list of supplements for any musculoskeletal condition. Her recommendations are not harmful or outside the common recommendations of an alternative medicine practitioner. She spices up the book with quotations to inspire good health practices, such as “The natural healing force within each one of us is the greatest force in getting well” (p. 31, Hippocrates), and “The art of medicine consists of amusing the patient while nature cures the disease” (p. 151, Voltaire).

Before reading this book, I frequently commented to patients that some chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes and hyperlipidemia are reversible through a healthy diet and lifestyle but degenerative musculoskeletal problems are resistant to lifestyle approaches. While *Bone on Bone* does not have the answer for all such problems, the book does provide hope and useful information for patients. This book has been useful to me in encouraging patients to care for their musculoskeletal system and not consider wear and tear as inevitable. Even with imaging findings of degeneration and damage, an active life without symptoms is possible, mainly from developing stronger muscles. I often say that without muscles, our skeleton falls to the ground and while you cannot get a new skeleton, you can always develop stronger muscles to support what you have. A patient told me about this book and I currently recommend it to patients and the residents I teach.