



The Great Cotzias: Discoverer of the Treatment for Parkinson's Disease

Dr. Bernard Michael Patten, Ms. Rita Mills

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Dr. Bernard Patten authentically captures in *The Great Cotzias* the realities of medical research; the petty jealousies, the back biting, the desperate race to knowledge—in short the red thread of life. Using novelistic techniques, we get the details, of the events and the people involved in the discovery of the beneficial effect of L-DOPA on Parkinson's disease.

The main character is George C. Cotzias, a Greek born, Harvard educated, hypomaniac physician who in his frenetic drive to win the Nobel Prize sacrificed wife, family, friends, and, finally himself. Eventually he makes the discovery that wins him the Laska award, America's highest honor in clinical research. The discovery proved that so-called hopeless degenerative nervous system diseases can benefit from replacement of natural body chemicals that are deficient with the disease. Worldwide, DOPA continues to be the most often used treatment for Parkinson's disease to date.

DOPA had an interesting side effect: Improved Sino-American relations. Chairman Mao of China famously claimed that all political power comes out of the muzzle of a gun. Cotzias proved that political power can come out of medicine bottle—Mao was one of the first patients to benefit spectacularly from the new treatment.

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