

## **BOOK REVIEW**

Advance for Physical Therapists & PT Assistants

Title: Painful Yarns: Metaphors & Stories to Help Understand the Biology of Pain

Author: G. Lorimer Moseley, PhD

Reviewer: By Laura Knight, MPT, PT

G. Lorimer Moseley, PhD, is the author of dozens of peer-reviewed articles on pain science and management, and co-author of the well-received, Explain Pain. In the fun read, Painful Yarns: Metaphors & Stories to Help Understand the Biology of Pain, he reveals his informal, "Lorimer" self.

The Painful Yarns are humorous, well-told personal experiences that serve as metaphors about how the brain perceives pain. Dr. Moseley, an Australian, trained as a physiotherapist. Upon graduation, he made the "daft decision" to become a musician, having never before played any musical instrument.

Apparently hunger prompted his return to the physiotherapy fold, where he not only achieved professional success but found he enjoyed his work. He earned a PhD in Pain Science from the University of Sydney, Australia, and is Nuffield Research Fellow in Medical Sciences at Oxford University, United Kingdom. He put these tales on paper at the urging of patients and fellow clinicians who enjoyed hearing his stories .

The book's first yarn, "Pain is a Critical Protective Device - Ignore it at Your Own Peril," is familiar to all of us who have ever upped the volume on the radio to drown out an abnormal or annoying car noise. Dr. Moseley is especially fond of vehicle metaphors and proceeds to "Crazy Kivin's Brush with Death" to illustrate how removing our body's ability to report pain (instead of seeking and finding its cause) can be highly detrimental.

In "Seeing is Believing," Dr. Moseley describes, in a down-to-earth, user-friendly way, how our vision works. He then makes a successful analogy between our visual system and pain system. He turns his stint as a musician to clinical use in the amusing "Ornithology & Amazing Grace" chapter, using an unexpected happening during a musical gig to illustrate that "when pain persists, it doesn't take much to make it hurt more."

When I first flipped through this slim paperback, I was worried about understanding Australian slang. But Dr. Moseley sprinkles footnotes throughout to define unfamiliar jargon and personal idiosyncrasies. Dr. Moseley's great ear for dialect adds to the enjoyment. Overall, the effect is something like a hybrid of your favorite college professor and Adam Sandler. My only quibble is that the book ends abruptly-you get the feeling the deadline was too close or had even passed-and Dr. Moseley needed to wrap it up.

The target audience of Painful Yarns is, first, people in pain and, second, people who treat people in pain. As a clinician, I found this book laugh-out-loud funny while appreciating Dr. Moseley's insights and storytelling ability. For a patient's perspective, I consulted with a bona fide member of the first target audience, my husband, a raconteur who has been managing chronic pain for 20 years.

He didn't find it as funny as I did (but maybe that was because I insisted he read it while having an exacerbation). He already knew and used much of the information, but stated, "Whenever you add humor to something, there's a better chance you'll take the message to heart."

What else can I say? Enjoy this book and share it with your patients. I'll pass this copy on to my husband's pain doctor.

Painful Yarns: Metaphors & Stories to Help Understand the Biology of Pain, is a 113-page, softcover text priced at \$19.95 and available from OPTP, 888-819-0121 or [www.optp.com](http://www.optp.com)

Laura Knight is a pediatric physical therapist at Spartanburg Regional in Spartanburg, SC. She would keep this book in her waiting room but most of her patients aren't in pain, and those that have pain are usually too young to read.