A stripper bitten by a venomous snake, a boy in suspended animation after collapsing in the snow, a woman who survived being run over by a train. These are some of the intriguing and baffling cases that Arnold Tweed has encountered in his fifty-year medical career. This collection of stories highlights the murky confusion that doctors face when confronted by the unexpected. They remind us that certainty in medicine is not assured and that assumptions can be misleading. The practice of medicine, for better or worse, is a curious mix of science, art, and divination, and the results are never entirely predictable.

I have never ceased to be amazed at the bewildering assortment of medical mysteries that have been thrown at me. Some cases were head scratchers, some were tragic, some amusing. Some defy explanation altogether. They have shown me that people are strange, conflicted, frail, and remarkable creatures. They have also shown me how some patients, even when brought to their knees by their ailments, can courageously struggle back onto their feet. These cases have taught me humility and caution. Faced with events I couldn’t control and outcomes that defied all predictions, I often felt that medicine was a series of traps designed to trip me up or, perhaps, a capricious gremlin whispering confusing advice in my ear and plotting to humiliate me.

— Arnold Tweed, MD

ARNOLD TWEED, MD is a son of the prairies. He grew up on a farm in southern Manitoba, went to High School in Killarney, and graduated from Brandon College in 1959. His early ambition was to be a cowboy, but he got side-tracked and graduated with an MD from the University of Manitoba in 1964. Since then he has forayed into several medical fields: general practice, emergency medicine, intensive care and anesthesiology as well as attempts at medical research, teaching and medical administration – and more recently writing medical memoirs.

Never having abandoned his early yearning for the carefree cowboy life, he has travelled widely, and has worked in Canada, Denmark, New Zealand, Oman, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Nepal. His travels and diverse medical ventures have been well rewarded. Some of the most important lessons he has learned about medicine have come from chance encounters with unusual patients, unique characters and strange medical situations. MEDICAL MISADVENTURES builds on some of those experiences.