
Exposition of Medical Greed in the select work of Robin Cook

¹Ms. S. Firthouse Tajunnisha, ²Dr. K. Sindhu

¹Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of English, Periyar University
Salem – 636 011

firthouse@periyaruniversity.ac.in

²Professor and Head, Department of English, Periyar University
Salem – 636 011

naveen303@periyaruniversity.ac.in

ABSTRACT

Robin Cook, widely regarded as the "Father of the Medical Thriller," transformed popular fiction by combining medical knowledge with suspenseful plots. Cook, a physician, uses his professional knowledge to uncover the interconnections between medical ethics, technology advancement, and corporate avarice. His groundbreaking work *Coma* (1977) created the medical thriller as a unique literary subgenre, dramatizing topics like organ harvesting and institutional corruption. Subsequent studies, most notably *Vital Signs*, broaden this critique to include reproductive technology, healthcare economics, malpractice, and medical commercialization. Cook's realistic images of in vitro fertilization and infertility treatments underscore the emotional, financial, and ethical difficulties suffered by individuals, while also exposing profit-driven conspiracies inside worldwide medical industries. His stories, which combine reality and fiction, entertain while also educating the public about the risks of unregulated medical commercialization. This research paper titled "Exposition of Medical Greed in the select work of Robin Cook," contends that Cook's fiction serves as both a social commentary and a cautionary tale, underlining how commercial pressures and legal frameworks influence modern medicine. Finally, Cook's reputation is defined by his ability to combine medical realism with thriller clichés, emphasizing ethical concerns while enthralling a global audience.

KEYWORDS

Fertility Treatment, Medical Greed, Robin Cook, *Vital Signs*.

Content:

The "Father of the Medical Thriller" is Robin Cook, an American novelist and doctor. He was a medical professional by training, and he combined his medical knowledge and writing abilities to create gripping novels that explore medical corruption, technology progress, and moral dilemmas. His breakthrough was *Coma* (1977), a novel that revealed the darker side of the hospital system, where people mysteriously enter comas in order to harvest their organs. The book inspired television and film adaptations and established a whole new literary subgenre: medical thriller. Cook's writings frequently address topics including organ transplants, genetic engineering, biotechnology, public health emergencies, and medical ethics, bringing difficult subjects to the general public's attention while also bringing attention to pressing situations.

Cook writes his fiction mostly to amuse his devoted readership, but as a Publishers Weekly review of *Vital Signs* correctly points out, his novels are also "designed, in part, to keep the public aware of both the technological possibilities of modern medicine and the ensuing ethical problems" (Steinberg, 1990, 55). Cook has a strong desire to place his interest in medical practices and policy in the broader framework of modern society. For instance, he is particularly worried about how market forces are affecting the healthcare sector. In light of this, a number of his books examine issues related to the economy of medication. Cook concentrates his

social critique on the law where the economy of medicine and the law converge, as is seen in cases of malpractice lawsuits or personal injury claims. His summaries of the operations of social institutions like the legal and medical fields starkly highlight many of the ways in which these professions' self-interests impede the general benefit.

Vital Signs is a thoughtful examination of significant moral dilemmas related to modern medical practice. Cook introduces readers to the contentious and unregulated world of reproductive clinics and their in vitro fertilization procedures in *Vital Signs*, which is set a few years after Blumenthal leaves Atlanta's Centers for Disease Control (CDC). This book offers a lot to educate readers about a fascinating area of medicine that has mostly remained hidden. Dr. Blumenthal's prior history is mentioned sporadically in *Vital Signs*, and Cyril Dubchek, who was a key character in *Outbreak*.

In *Vital Signs*, the doctor takes on the role of the patient, giving readers an unexpected turn of events. Now married and conscious of her biological clock, Marissa Blumenthal wishes to start a family. She goes through in vitro fertilization procedures after learning that she is infertile due to clogged fallopian tubes. Almost anyone would find Marissa Blumenthal's agonizing experiences at the Boston Women's Clinic difficult. She undergoes numerous cycles of egg extraction and implantation, as well as frequent injections of mood-altering drugs, all made worse by her fixation with being pregnant. This costly, time-consuming, and emotionally taxing endeavor has a negative impact on Blumenthal's marriage and her own medical business.

A counselor she visits sums up her position well: "Basically, the problem is a Sophie's choice," Linda said halfway into the hour. "You have two equally unsatisfactory possibilities: you can accept your infertility without further treatment as your husband is suggesting and thereby live a life that is contrary to your expectations, or you can continue with the IVF, which will lead to continued stress on yourself and on your relationship, continued cost as your husband has pointed out, and continued stress for you both with no guarantee of success." (*Vital Signs*, 54)

The complexities of the in vitro fertilization process have been thoroughly examined by Robin Cook, who provides readers with an incredibly realistic understanding of the mechanics involved. The process takes a toll on the couple's emotions, as evidenced by scenes involving Marissa and her husband Robert Buchanan. Feeling self-conscious about his frequent trips to the clinic to donate sperm, Robert complains, "Part of the problem for me is that we have lost our private life. I feel like a fish in a fishbowl" (*Vital Signs*, 49). Marissa, caught in "a constant state of PMS" (*Vital Signs*, 16), fears that her whole life is about to spin out of control. Cook dedicates *Vital Signs* to the countless couples who have suffered the emotional and physical trials and tribulations of infertility and its modern treatments because he understands the strength and endurance needed by those who enroll in this course.

With an explanation of sinister activities that occur inside the prestigious levels of the medical profession, *Vital Signs* aims to excite readers. Once more, greed serves as the driving factor for opportunistic criminals, and this conspiracy, which in this instance successfully makes billions of dollars, operates on a global basis. A global cartel of fertility clinics has discovered a way to profit ruthlessly from the anxieties and aspirations of infertile couples by using a mysterious set of medical procedures. Because it can cost up to \$10,000 for each cycle of egg harvest, fertilization, and implantation, the clinics alter their success rates to ensure that couples will go through the procedure multiple times.

For example, Marissa is advised not to give up on getting pregnant before she has tried eight times. The conspiracy that underlies this strategy, however, is even more heinous. The clinics' founders have managed to establish a stable market for the specialist services they provide by drawing on experience from China, where family size is severely regulated by legislation. They deliberately target young, wealthy couples as their victims, causing the harm that will probably result in the couples' reunion.

Actually, Cook's clever combination of fact and fantasy is what drives his storylines. Cook continues to dominate the genre he has greatly influenced, and his works are both fabulously entertaining and instructive or

warning. A reviewer has noted, "Cook's popular medical thrillers are designed, in part, to keep the public aware of both the technological possibilities of modern medicine and the ensuing ethical problems" (Steinberg, *Vital Signs*, 55). On the other, Cook himself recognizes that his chosen genre has provided him with "plenty of mystery left to propel a good adventure yarn" ("Deadly Obsession," 24).

His stories are based on medical science, which is a factual field. In a frightening manner, human conduct is no exception. Therefore, it is up to the reader to determine if Cook's assessment of human avarice is fictional. Cook's techniques for creating tension in *Vital Signs* serve several plot points at once. He skillfully employs techniques that readers of the thriller genre are accustomed to, crafting a plot that blends medical mystery with political intrigue and personal betrayal: Readers who enjoy close escapes won't be let down because one thrilling sequence flows into another. Cook gives the reader hints, just like other thriller authors do. He does a good job of directing his readers' expectations using this strategy. The clues he offers serve to inevitably pull readers into his developing plot since his goal is to transform what appear to be unlikely suspicions into the realm of horrifying possibility.

When *Vital Signs* begins, Marissa Blumenthal has left the CDC to work for a pediatric partnership, which is the area where she completed her residency. She believes that the exploits of her younger years are safely behind her now that she is happily married, settled in Boston, and content with her new work. Naturally, it doesn't take long for *Vital Signs'* plot to demonstrate that this is very definitely not the case. Blumenthal does not completely realize that anything is wrong with her treatment until she joins a self help group, despite the fact that her experiences at the Women's Clinic have been far from acceptable and that her fruitless attempts to conceive have left her heartbroken and disillusioned.

She then has the opportunity to learn that the extremely uncommon condition that has blocked her fallopian tubes has also affected a number of other women. It turns out that Wendy Wilson, a longtime buddy from medical school, is one of these ladies. The two doctors decide to look into the facts related to their health since they are suspicious of the remarkable coincidence. They soon discover that the Women's Clinic will not divulge any medical records, including their own, but they do discover one encouraging hint: Dr. Tristan Williams, a pathologist at an Australian experimental fertility clinic, has written a fascinating paper outlining his research into the exact medical conundrum that piques their interest.

In an attempt to find Dr. Williams, Blumenthal and Wilson decide to combine additional research with a much-needed vacation by traveling to Brisbane.

Readers will be thrilled to learn that the protagonist Blumenthal's journey to Australia is only the beginning of yet another exciting adventure. Robin Cook uses the chase motif, which is essential to the suspense genre, once more. However, he pulls out amazing variants on these common thriller cliches since he is not content with a typical car chase or a typical group of hired goons. The criminals in *Vital Signs* are revealed to be members of the exotic Wing Sin sect, a potent worldwide crime syndicate, and the mundane automobile is swapped out for the wide-open jaws of a great white shark.

It is evident that Cook has discovered new ways to tell a compelling story when he adds an account of Blumenthal's wholly unapproved trip to China to these incredible occurrences.

Dr. Tristan Williams has written a scholarly study detailing an uncommon number of occurrences of TB salpingitis in infertile women, which has piqued Marissa Blumenthal's curiosity in meeting with him. TB salpingitis has been identified as Blumenthal's personal issue. When she goes to see him at Female Care Australia, she finds that he has been dismissed and his research rejected by the clinic, thus he is no longer employed there. Williams is now a bush doctor who flies into isolated areas of Australia and is quite challenging to find.

The two discover that Female Care Australia has a fatal secret it wants to keep hidden when they eventually meet and share information. Chinese-speaking physicians occasionally make inexplicable appearances at the clinic before swiftly leaving. Blumenthal and Williams make the decision to travel to China

in the hopes of learning more about the function of these physicians. The two are pursued by Wing Sin assassins at every turn because the clinic's authorities are naturally keen to halt these investigations.

When things get tough, Robert Buchanan, who is undoubtedly a great company in good times, is shown to be less than ideal. While it's true that the couple is on edge due to their frustrating attempts to conceive, Cook makes it apparent that Robert's tolerance for Marissa is rapidly ebbing. Marissa's need to comprehend what has happened to her intensifies as her marriage struggles. Her trip to Australia is motivated by this. Robert is later killed by the Wing Sin assassins who are waiting for Marissa when he tries to meet her in Hong Kong. Robert is thus removed from the picture by Cook's use of *deus ex machina*, but his passing offers readers a startling irony: Robert, a health care entrepreneur, had made large investments in the very company that led to his murder.

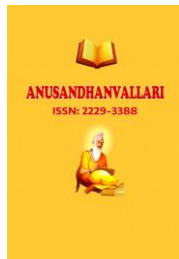
Marissa is a fantastic fit for Dr. Tristan Williams. He is willing to accompany her on her trips to Communist China and Hong Kong because he is bold and adventurous. The ravenous shark claimed Marissa's friend Wendy Wilson. Since the people who protect the clinics' hideous secrets are also accountable for his wife's murder, Tristan has a personal stake in finding the answer. The two doctors decide to start a new life together after working together to find the pieces that are missing from their puzzle. Williams' six-year-old kid has been residing in Berkeley, California, with his grandparents. Marissa intends to adopt a Chinese child to expand her already-formed new family.

All of the puzzle pieces fit together perfectly as *Vital Signs* builds to its conclusion. Blumenthal and Williams find that rural Chinese doctors have taught Female Care Australia how to sterilize women in China without the need for anesthesia. By using this method and then giving the women a vaccination that causes symptoms similar to tuberculosis, the clinic can accomplish its goals without leaving any evidence of the sterilization process it employed. After successfully escaping the tenacious assailants, the two physicians eventually arrive in the United States, where the FBI provides them with shelter in the far-off Montana wilderness through its secret witness program.

Cook goes one step farther with his conspiracy scenario in *Vital Signs*, as doctors establish their own market for specialized services, to show the malevolent inventiveness of avarice. The profession of medicine is portrayed in this book as a fully fledged enterprise. The prosperous cartel, which runs fertility clinics in Australia, the US, Europe, and Asia, poses a threat to control the global market. Dr. Blumenthal provides the following explanation for the cartel's remarkable expansion and entry into the US market: "The whole infertility industry is totally unregulated and unsupervised. It's grown up in a no-man's land between medicine and business. And the government has just looked the other way. Anything to do with reproduction is politically dangerous" (*Vital Signs*, 328).

The reproductive clinics' operations in *Vital Signs* provide a clear and straightforward illustration of medical for profit. Blumenthal is astounded by the opulent facilities she finds when she visits Female Care Australia. The public relations specialist at the clinic tells her: "It's a tribute to capitalism. Private initiative and private investment. It's the only way to get things done in the modern world" (*Vital Signs*, 152). The financial success of this business strategy is readily apparent when Blumenthal sees the suite of offices occupied by the clinic's director: its splendid trappings make her feel as though she were entering the "office of the CEO of a major Fortune 500 company" (*Vital Signs*, 154). Obviously, this impression aptly reinforces the strong ties to the world of business that the clinic represents.

The irony of Female Care Australia's profit-making plan calls into question how scientific and technology development is supported and funded. In reality, this clinic's experimenters have created *in vitro* fertilization methods that yield a very high degree of success. Ironically, the clinic will make less money thanks to this technological advancement because patients will undoubtedly need fewer visits. The clinic's directors make the terrible choice to establish and manage their own market, in part because they need the money to fund more research, which will open up new revenue streams. The commercial and medical sciences have undoubtedly forged an unholy partnership at Female Care Australia.



In *Vital Signs*, the indignation is extremely intimate because readers are acquainted with the victim. Therefore, in this story, Marissa Blumenthal uses her search for knowledge as a way to atone for the serious harm she has endured. This particularly evokes readers' sympathies, as does the novel's poignant subject matter. Robin Cook exposes a risk that comes with practicing medicine for financial gain in *Vital Signs*. Naturally, this theme is current and appears as a subtext in a lot of Cook's works of fiction. Since the modern health care system is unquestionably a component of a capitalist economy, it must, in general, turn a profit. There are now fresh concerns regarding who will profit and how much they will profit due to changing conditions in the medical field. Cook sees a potential for enormous temptation in the turning of medicine into a large industry, even while he is not particularly concerned with doctors' wishes for a fair reward from their extremely professional work. By revealing rivalries between groups vying for control of health care funds, Robin Cook hopes to demystify some of the complexity surrounding the medical industry and lessen the stigma associated with physicians.

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