

Skin: A Biography  
by Sharad Paul

Reviewed by Robert Norman, D.O.

Dr. Sharad Paul's book **Skin: A Biography** is a wonderful tale of the integument and its contents, fueled by Dr. Paul's innate curiosity and appetite for life. He shifts his literary focus from Einstein to Sir Edmund Hillary, Darwin to Mendel, and to many others, each time capturing a unique aspect of what we all have in common – skin. His journeys take us with him around the world, including Iceland, where he lectures and investigates evolutionary skin biology while being offered whale and puffin cuisine by the locals.

In one of my favorite chapters, *Touching God*, he focuses on touch, the first human sensation to develop in the womb. He provides a colorful description of skin research including Friedrich Merkel's pursuit of discovering touch receptors. Along the way, he includes intellectual riffs on leeches, leprosy, and the gift of pain. He also describes why skin infections may occur at the site of sutures and includes an extended and entertaining quote from Mark Twain.

In the chapter titled *True Colors* he reflects on the complex interaction in India between color and caste. Along the way he includes tales of vitamin deficiency and human migratory patterns. At the end of the book, Dr. Paul delivers nine thought-provoking laws he calls *De Natura Cutis* (On the Nature of Skin).

A noted plastic surgeon and skin cancer researcher, Dr. Paul provides entertaining and thought-provoking tales of adventure, while stimulating us to take a closer look at the mystery of evolution and our skin.

Highly recommended for anyone with skin!

(About this book: At present it may be difficult to obtain. Amazon charges \$42, but it can be obtained for around \$10 elsewhere. No Kindle version available at present. I will contact the author and find out more details. DJE)