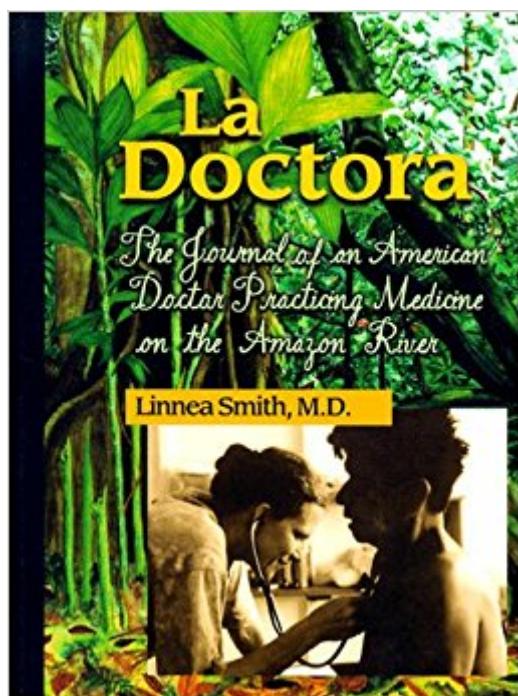


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# La Doctora: The Journal Of An American Doctor Practicing Medicine On The River



## **Synopsis**

This doctor still makes house calls. In 1990, Dr. Linnea Smith went on vacation. The result? She abandoned a thriving medical practice in Wisconsin to serve the Yagua Indians in the deepest part of the rainforest of Peru alone. Today, Dr. Smith routinely hears the midnight cry of "Doctora!" from patients facing life-and-death emergencies. Accompany her on house calls where the unknown often awaits. Observe how she treats exotic diseases, alligator bites and complicated births almost a day's journey away from the closest hospital. Taken straight from the pages of Dr. Smith's journal, *La Doctora* offers readers a rare glimpse into the suspense and drama of practicing medicine in a culture far removed from the sophisticated supplies and supports of 20th-century medicine. Learn how Dr. Smith evolved from a "strange white woman" to an adopted member of the indigenous community. Her story of adventure, self-discovery and service creates an inspirational testimonial to one person's power to make a lasting difference.

## **Book Information**

Paperback: 238 pages

Publisher: Pfeifer-Hamilton Pubs; First Printing edition (December 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1570251401

ISBN-13: 978-1570251405

Product Dimensions: 8 x 6 x 0.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 32 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #2,677,854 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #84 in Books > Travel > South America > Brazil > #1077 in Books > Travel > South America > General #1104 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Social Scientists & Psychologists

## **Customer Reviews**

Linnea Smith, a native of Wisconsin, entered medical school at age 30. After graduating and receiving board certification in Internal Medicine, she joined a small medical group in rural Wisconsin. She left that practice in 1990 to set up a remote jungle clinic on the banks of the River, three hours down river from Iquitos, Peru.

What I optimistically called "the clinic" was at that time one small room, about eight feet by twelve feet, in one of the Explorama's thatch-roofed houses. Lighting was courtesy of kerosene lantern,

bats roosted underneath the table that I used for a desk, and running water was what happened when I filled a pitcher at the stream and tipped it. TABLE OF CONTENTS: My Wife Can't Have Her Baby Leap into the Unknown My Last Vacation Setting Up Shop Jungle Medicine Indiana Life on the Life Along the Stream Life Outside the Clinic Red Tape Fiesta Jungle Doctor Culture Clash Necrotizing Fasciitis Tropical Diseases More Learning Clinic Expansion Rotary Rescue Juvencio Building the Clinic More Jungle Medicine Trauma Childbirth Snakebites Failures and Reflections The End of the Beginning Coming of Age What Am I Doing Here?

Having just returned from a visit to the and the Yanamono Clinic, I subsequently read *La Doctora* on the recommendation of a fellow traveler. I can say that Dr. Smith accurately represents the environment and way of life of the jungle people. Now some years later, there was a young Peruvian doctor on site, preventative programs seems to be doing well, solar panels are bringing some limited electricity to the better off of the local people, but life remains challenging and access to medical care at the clinic remains a vital service. I understand that the support of donors and free medicines brings people from long distances to the clinic, because often they cannot afford care or medicine from clinics available in a city such as Iquitos. Reading *La Doctora* was like revisiting the and Explorama Lodge in my living room. A quick read, I enjoyed hearing Dr. Smith tell her story. You cannot help be pulled in toward these friendly, loving people, who clearly care for their families, work hard to survive, and live with a true sense of community. The clinic is a marvel, I was impressed by the facility, it's cleanliness and organization, and mission. *La Doctora* will give you a glimpse into a different world that you otherwise might not experience.

Linnea Smith is a wonderful doctor working in a tiny clinic she founded in the Peruvian . This book documents daily life in the small villages a few hours by fast boat from the city of Iquitos. Last month I made my second visit to Explorama Lodge and stopped in to see the latest clinic which is just a short paddle away. This clinic has saved many lives in the more than 2 decades that it has served struggling villagers. Read the book, take your next vacation in the and visit or donate to the clinic if you can.

This is an inspiring book that's a pleasure to read. It gives the reader the vicarious enjoyment of being part of a noble endeavor. In an age of "road rage" and the obsessive accumulation of more and more things (which often do not make us happy), it's exhilarating to experience a taste of Dr. Linnea's life. Dr. Linnea shows us how one can give up almost all the material possessions and

creature comforts of the modern world and still find meaning, happiness, and personal fulfillment. Dr. Linnea has created for herself a significant life. A life with much to teach a troubled world. While missionaries have long sacrificed themselves to serve God, win the eternal salvation of lost souls, and earn a place in the pantheon of saints, Dr. Linnea does it for the pure humanity of the effort. Goodness is indeed its own reward in this outpost. Because of Dr. Linnea's "wonderful life", many lives have been enriched and some even saved. More importantly, countless hours of suffering have been alleviated. This is the most humane thing: ending or reducing pain. We all have to die but we shouldn't have to suffer or endure years of pain when a cure is available. Dr. Linnea provides the cures that often would not be provided otherwise. She treats the sick and asks nothing in return; she allows her patients to keep their personal integrity; she respects their beliefs; she grants them respect and maintains their dignity; I think this could be called love. On the surface, this book is about a one woman medical practice hidden in the rain forest. Beneath the surface, however, it is about finding meaning in a world that too often seems to be without meaning. Dr. Smith's "life-example" has the power to let you view your own life differently; perhaps with a clearer insight. With one brave decision, everything can change. For Dr. Smith and thousands of her patients, the change has had life-sustaining significance. I felt a similar elation reading this book that I experienced when the US Women's Soccer Team won the World Cup. I was proud that our young women could show the world such excellence in a non-American sport. What else would this generation of young American women do in the future now that they saw what they could do? It is the power of their "example" that is so exciting. I stood and cheered in the privacy of my living room. Dr. Linnea is such an example, as well. She's one of our own; a human we can be proud of -- a human we would gladly point to if Extra Terrestrials came to earth and wanted to interview an exemplar human being for the Encyclopedia Galactica. Better yet, she is in "real time".

We met Dr. Smith when recently in the in Peru. She cured my husband's plantar fascitis with a shot of lidocaine which we feel enabled him to walk properly and thus stretch the fachitis. It cost 25cents for the lidocaine and needle and he had spent way more of that in the States with a cordisone shot, MRI, special night boot, creams to rub on his foot, etc. In any event we love this woman and have begun a correspondence with her and her foundation. Her book tells how she left a thriving practice in Wisconsin to come to the and open a clinic. She is a very special lady. Her story moves quickly and is interesting. If you ever were tempted to do good in the world this woman takes you step by step on her journey. Truth is often better than fiction.

It wasn't so long ago that I had the privilege of meeting Linnea in Peru. She was just coming back from a fundraising journey to the States, where she received a prize of recognition for her selfless work in ia. I was with a tour group that was to stay at several ian jungle lodges. The was in it's annual flood stage and the only way any of us could get around was by small boat. La doctora Linnea had her own dugout which she paddled to and from the clinic, the lodge and her patients all by herself, in a dress. She wore skirts almost entirely because of the humidity and local custom. The only women who wear shorts or pants in ia are tourists and scientists. Every evening Linnea would come to the lodge for a bit of relaxation and conversation with whomever was staying there, but one couldn't help but notice how more comfortable she was in the company of the locals and guides. The Ribiernos [local river dwellers] didn't ask rude or probing questions. They were friendly without compromising her privacy. This ingrained need to keep part of herself to herself comes through in the book she's written. She's happy to talk about her work and her love of the people, but reveals little of her previous life. I recommend this book for the incredible story, the sense of place, to learn about people we would otherwise never know. She may not speak book-learned Spanish, but communicates fluently with her friends and patients. As she writes, she arrived in Peru speaking no Spanish.

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