

What I Am Reading December 27th



By Chuck Dinerstein, MD, MBA — December 27, 2019

In between the fa la la la la, I had time to read about snowflakes and avalanches, an example of surprise billing that makes me ashamed for my profession, an article on the year's best articles, and for all of you readers, a discussion of how to read a book.



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Four and a half years ago, an earthquake in Nepal initiated an avalanche on Mt. Everest, resulting in the deaths of 22

“Falling masses of snow and ice, avalanches pose a threat to anyone on snowy mountainsides. Beautiful to witness from afar, they can be deadly because of their intensity and seeming unpredictability. Humans trigger 90 percent of avalanche disasters ...” [1]

In avalanche-prone areas, efforts are made, often with the loud sounds generated by cannons, to provoke the event in a safe way, without risking human life. But what causes an avalanche to occur, turns out it is a bit of physics with a dash of climatology. From Nautil.us, [How a Snowflake Turns Into an Avalanche](#) [2]

A lot of ink has been used this year in discussing surprise billing when it turns out your physician or the facility they are using are “out of network” and you are about to undergo what we used to call a “wallet biopsy.” Here is a tale from the Kaiser Health Network, [For Her Head Cold, Insurer Coughed Up \\$25,865](#)

[3]. This is unacceptable care, I doubt than anything in the medical record will reflect a need for such testing. The involved physicians should be afforded the opportunity to discuss their diagnostic and treatment thoughts with New York's Office of the Professions Board of Medical Examiners. Rant over, thank you for your understanding.

“We’re in the last month of the 2010s, and that has meant a lot of end-of-decade best-of lists on everything from movies to songs to albums to TV shows, ...So I started thinking of what a list of the papers — in the social sciences like economics, political science, sociology, and psychology, but also in philosophy — that most influenced me over the 2010s would look like. Unsurprisingly, it looked like a list of ideas that have influenced my writing in Future Perfect profoundly. The themes that run through these papers — how to conduct and synthesize scientific evidence better; how to efficiently save lives in public health; how to think about challenges like AI and the far future — are major preoccupations of Future Perfect as a section of Vox.”

This article of articles resonated for me, From Vox, [The 2010s featured a lot of great social science. Here are my 12 favorite studies](#) [4].

“My private library consists of 3,000 books – roughly one third read, one third part-read and one third unread. New ones are regularly added, and every year I sort them out and get rid of some. 3,000 books are a modest library compared to that, say, of the late Umberto Eco which is said to have contained 30,000 books. And yet often, I can only vaguely remember what was in my books. When I gaze along their spines, inklings arise like wispy clouds, mixed with vague feelings, a lonely scene lights up here and there, and sometimes a sentence drifts by like a rowing boat lost in a silent mist.”

I couldn't resist sharing this one, after all, if you are reading this you are a special type of person, a reader. An essay by Dolf Robelli, a Swiss author, [How to Read a Book](#) [5].

[1] From [Avalanches, explained](#) [6]

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[1] <https://pixabay.com/photos/books-reading-beach-vacation-918521/>

[2] <http://earth.nautil.us/article/496/how-a-snowflake-turns-into-an-avalanche>

[3] <https://khn.org/news/medical-bill-of-the-month-head-cold-throat-swab-dna-tests-insurer-coughed-up-25k/>

[4] <https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2019/12/23/21003232/best-social-science-studies-economics-political-science-2010s>

[5] <https://www.dobelli.com/en/essays/how-to-read-books/>

[6] <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/natural-disasters/avalanches/>