

## Interview with Richard E. Sall Author of “Straightjacket”

Reader Views is happy to be talking with Richard E. Sall, author of the new fast-paced medical suspense-drama “Straightjacket.” Richard is being interviewed by Juanita Watson, Assistant Editor of Reader Views.

**Juanita:** Thanks for joining us today Richard. Please tell what inspired you to write your book “Straightjacket”?

**Richard:** This started off as a series of medical vignettes by doctors in the hospital setting. I collected them because they told what doctors were thinking while caring for patients. The idea of incorporating them into a book was presented to a film producer friend of mine. He inspired me to put them into a storyline. My experience in a surgical residency became the center of the story and it flowed from there.

**Juanita:** What is the storyline and tell us about the main characters of your book?

**Richard:** Joe Grady is a surgery resident is in the last month of his long training program when he discovers that he hasn’t done enough surgery to qualify for certification by his chief of Surgery, “Little Hitler”. He has become enemies with the Hospital Administrator who is intent on punishing him for not playing ball with hospital politics. He refuses to give in to the bean counters.

Increasingly, he is getting involved with a nurse, Linda Jablonski, who has a demented mother. The mother is possessive of her daughter and is physically threatening. A pathology resident becomes his best friend and confidante. A few unexplained deaths become the focus of their attention as he struggles to complete his surgery requirement. As his last 30 days near the end, the tension increases, culminating in an all out struggle for survival.

**Juanita:** Joe Grady is characterized as sarcastic, powerful, calm and in control – a strong image and a hero that wants only to care for his patients. Where did the idea of this character come from and is there a little of you in the personality of Joe Grady?

**Richard:** The character came from an actual surgeon I once knew. Yes, there is a little of me in the personality of Joe Grady. The problem in real life is that contrary to our desire for independence and nonconformity—traits that we admire in a fantasy character in stories; they are destructive in the real world of today because there isn’t much room for independent thought or action. Our society has become increasingly demanding of conformity.

**Juanita:** What has been your history with the medical system?

**Richard:** After internship I was drafted as a medical officer with a combat unit called the Third Armored Cavalry. Then I went through a surgical residency followed by private medical practice. Eventually, I became board certified in Medicine after post graduate study. I worked in every department of the hospital including a rotation through Children's Hospital and Pathology. Presently, I work daily in a clinic setting in Occupational Medicine.

**Juanita:** Your main character Joe Grady is forced to undergo an almost impossible residency program. Tell us about his predicament and the realities of true life residency programs.

**Richard:** The Surgical Residency Program was the hardest thing I experienced in my lifetime. In fact, I think it caused a post traumatic neurosis that required many years for me to overcome. It is a carryover from the old days when one had to prove their self worth by undergoing a painful rite of passage.

**Juanita:** There seems to be a high level of chaos and drama going on at Detroit General Hospital. Though this is a fiction, do you feel most hospitals have a certain level of chaos and drama bubbling under the surface?

**Richard:** All busy city hospitals are chaotic because of the human condition. Many times it is the visitors rather than the patients that are causing problems. Or the social interaction of hospital staff members can cause conflicts. Or maybe a hundred other things that can come in the door. It's no place for a sissy.

**Juanita:** Your book is said to be wildly funny and deeply satirical. Is there a certain amount of disillusionment that happens with new medical workers that genuinely want to help people over and above concerning themselves with the political and personal dramas going on around them?

**Richard:** Disillusionment undoubtedly occurs in new medical workers after real hospital experiences. This is a correction to their naivety. Humor occurs in real life experiences. People can be funny.

**Juanita:** How has the constant drive to make more money and cut costs changed the face of hospitals and the medical industry?

**Richard:** Big time.

**Juanita:** You have a number of themes going on in "Straightjacket." What does Joe Grady have to teach your readers about the 'coming of age' process of a surgeon, love, hope and healing?

**Richard:** Joe Grady has the determination and strength to overcome adversity to such an extent that nothing can deter him from achieving his professional goal. When love intervenes other complications ensue. Compromise becomes the order of the day.

**Juanita:** There seem to be an ever increasing amount of programs on television surrounding hospitals, emergency rooms, surgeries – real life and fictional dramas. Why do you think the public is so interested in what goes on behind the door of our hospitals?

**Richard:** People are interested in other people i.e. human interest stories.

**Juanita:** I have heard that “Straightjacket” really is a hilarious medical drama causing readers to laugh throughout at the many ‘goings on’ surrounding Joe Grady. Tell us about the humorous nature of “Straightjacket” and does this reflect your own personal outlook?

**Richard:** Sarcasm and human behavior are funny in this story similar to a “Dirty Harry” story which is also a drama.

**Juanita:** Richard, what do you hope readers take away after reading “Straightjacket”?

**Richard:** Readers should develop a greater appreciation of hospital based professionals, particularly general surgeons and nurses. It is a calling for these dedicated individuals who are driven by their humanitarian ideology.

**Juanita:** Richard, who would enjoy reading your book?

**Richard:** All readers.

**Juanita:** How can readers find out more about you and your book “Straightjacket”?

**Richard:** Amazon.com and my web site [occmedcentral.com](http://occmedcentral.com).

**Juanita:** Thanks for talking with us today, Richard. Your book “Straightjacket” is getting rave reviews and we were excited to get the chance to speak with you. Are there any last thoughts you’d like to share with your readers?

**Richard:** I hope readers get as much enjoyment reading this book as I had writing it.