

When doctors excel in history as non-doctors

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What do the inventor of corn flakes, the first sub-four-minute mile runner, the face (literally) of revolution, and the only writer to have different works simultaneously at No. 1 on television, film, and book sales in the US have in common?

They're all physicians.

Corn flakes was invented by John Harvey Kellogg and his brother Will Keith in 1878. Kellogg was Chief Medical Officer at the Battle Creek Sanitarium, a facility owned and operated by the Seventh-Day Adventists, and the sanitarium's patients were served corn flakes not only for their nutritional value but also for their supposedly antilibidinal effects.

Roger Bannister became the first person in history to run 1 mile in less than 4 minutes. After graduating from medical school at the University of Oxford, Bannister competed in the 1952 Olympics but only finished fourth. This failure to secure a medal pushed Bannister to set his sights on a goal previously thought unattainable: the 4-minute mile. His success was hailed as one of the greatest sporting moments in history. Bannister soon after retired from athletics to focus on medicine, becoming a respected neurologist as well as Master of Pembroke College, Oxford.

Ernesto "Che" Guevara is known the world over as a revolutionary, and T-shirts embla-



Dr Jose Rizal, national hero of the Philippines, on an old stamp.

zoned with his face have become a potent symbol in pop culture. What isn't as well-known is the fact that Guevara was a physician. In fact, his bestselling chronicle *The Motorcycle Diaries* is based on a 9-month journey he took while on a break from medical school. Although he returned to Argentina and received his medical degree in 1953, Guevara considered fighting "for a better life for all the poor and exploited" a higher calling, and his revolutionary efforts in Cuba, Congo and Bolivia are considered by many to be his primary legacy.

ER. Jurassic Park. Disclosure. All were No. 1 in the US in 1994, and all were created by Michael Crichton, whose other popular works

include such thrillers as *The Andromeda Strain*, *Congo*, *Sphere*, *Rising Sun*, and the *Jurassic Park* sequel *The Lost World*. Crichton graduated from Harvard Medical School and entered post-doctoral fellowship at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, but he never pursued a license to practice medicine, concentrating instead on his creative endeavors.

Kellogg, Bannister, Guevara and Crichton are just some of the physicians who have gained recognition for their achievements in non-medical fields. Others in this group include Maria Montessori, an Italian physician who developed the educational methods named after her. Sun Yat-sen, known as the “Father of the Nation” of Taiwan, studied medicine in Hong Kong before becoming one of the greatest leaders in modern Chinese history.

Physician writers are particularly prominent. Khaled Hosseini, the Afghan-born author of *The Kite Runner* and other bestselling novels, trained in internal medicine at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and practiced for 10 years be-

fore becoming a full-time writer. John Keats, one of the most beloved English poets, and Anton Chekhov, one of the world’s greatest short story writers, were also physicians. Sherlock Holmes, whose genius as a fictional detective has proven to be timeless, was created by Arthur Conan Doyle, a Scottish physician who wrote stories while waiting for his patients.

In the Philippines, perhaps the most famous physician in history is Jose Rizal, whose work as an ophthalmologist was overshadowed by his patriotism and eventual martyrdom. Rizal’s writings helped incite the Philippine revolution against Spanish rule, and it was for this reason that he was executed by the Spaniards and is now considered a national hero.

Many doctors devote their whole lives to medicine and the world is so much the better for their faithfulness to their calling, yet there are physicians who have proven that they can also make a difference in people’s lives outside of the consultation room. 