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Dare to Know

Medical Comics

Comics that feature medical personnel and the practice of medicine.

A genre in which medical professionals, medical practices, medical science, and illness are depicted. Usually, the plot is set within a hospital, a clinic, a medical school, or other healthcare institution. Stories often center on medical environments and the limitations, possibilities, and dangers of medicine, and portray characters as they deal with the problems and difficulties that occur in surgery, virology, immunology, and other medical fields. Protagonists are typically physicians who apply their knowledge of medicine to resolve a crisis or situation. In medical crime comics, a doctor or nurse assumes the role of amateur detective to solve a mystery (usually one of murder) that cannot otherwise be solved by law enforcement officers. Medical thriller comics can portray scenarios where epidemics threaten some or all of humanity, or medical professionals use their training for sinister motivations. Protagonists must cure a virus, mitigate a pandemic, or halt the illegal or immoral use of medical technology. Medical horror comics mix the hazards of medicine with horror elements. Human test subjects could be involved in extreme medical trials, or psychotic or messianic practitioners might abuse their access to unsuspecting patients and unethically push the boundaries of science. The extension or perfection of human existence is a common theme. Some plots bring into question the ethics and philosophy of medicine. The details that eventually resolve the crisis involve medical research on the author's part, or specific medical knowledge. The depiction of characters, conflict, and experiences relevant to the field of medicine are important to the story, which imparts a sense of realism to the reader. Nicholas P. Dallis's *Rex Morgan, M.D.* (1948-ongoing); Dell Comics/Western Publishing's *Linda Lark*, *Student Nurse* (1961-1963), *Ben Casey* (1962-1964), and *Dr. Kildare* (1962-1965); and Charlton Comics' *Nurse Betsy Crane* (1961-1964) and *Doctor Tom Brent*, *Young Intern* (1963) are classic examples.

Common Elements

Intrepid yet flawed doctors
Dedicated or burned-out nurses
Beautiful young researchers
Medical students or interns

Hospital or laboratory settings
Medical procedures
Ethical dilemmas
Moral questions
High stakes
Medical jargon
Medical malpractice
Greedy co-conspirators

Evil corporations
Viruses or disease
Medical quackery
Mad doctors and scientists
Unorthodox lab experiments
Esoteric healing
Mysticism

Graphic Novel Examples

<i>The Bad Doctor</i> (2014) by Ian Williams	<i>Lissa: A Story About Medical Promise, Friendship, and Revolution</i> (2017) by Sherine Hamdy and Coleman Nye
<i>Couch Fiction</i> (2010) by Philippa Perry	
<i>The Hospital Suite</i> (2014) by John Porcellino	<i>MD, the Complete Series</i> (2021) by Reed Crandall, Joe Orlando, Graham Ingels, and George Evans
<i>The Lady Doctor</i> (2019) by Ian Williams	