



## The Lobotomy Letters: The Making of American Psychosurgery (Rochester Studies in Medical History)

By Mical Raz

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### **The Lobotomy Letters: The Making of American Psychosurgery (Rochester Studies in Medical History)** By Mical Raz

The rise and widespread acceptance of psychosurgery constitutes one of the most troubling chapters in the history of modern medicine. By the late 1950s, tens of thousands of Americans had been lobotomized as treatment for a host of psychiatric disorders. Though the procedure would later be decried as devastating and grossly unscientific, many patients, families, and physicians reported veritable improvement from the surgery; some patients were even considered cured. The Lobotomy Letters gives an account of why this controversial procedure was sanctioned by psychiatrists and doctors of modern medicine. Drawing from original correspondence penned by lobotomy patients and their families as well as from the professional papers of lobotomy pioneer and neurologist Walter Freeman, the volume reconstructs how physicians, patients, and their families viewed lobotomy and analyzes the reasons for its overwhelming use. Mical Raz, MD/PhD, is a physician and historian of medicine.

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## **Editorial Review**

### Review

If you have read Jack Pressman's Last Resort, you may have concluded that you had read all you need to about the history of lobotomy. Mical Raz's book will make you think again. Through a close and thoughtful examination of lobotomist Walter Freeman, and especially his relations with patients, Raz has made a major contribution. BULLETIN OF THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE This volume provides a novel perspective on Walter Freeman's early training, linking it convincingly to his later professional practices and views. Highlighting that the efficacy of medical procedures is a complex and to some degree context-bound business, Raz's work is an important contribution to the history of twentieth-century American psychiatry. -- Andrew Scull, Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Science Studies, University of California, San Diego

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