



## **MEDIA TALKING POINTS**

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## **IN SICKNESS: a memoir by Dr. BARRETT ROLLINS**

- Dr. Barrett Rollins is Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School and chief scientific officer emeritus at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.
- In 2008, his wife, Jane Weeks, a brilliant Harvard oncologist made Barrett Rollins take a vow of secrecy that would culminate five years later in her shocking death.
- As the married, Harvard University cancer doctors went about their public roles as marquee authorities on cancer treatment, Rollins helped Weeks conceal her breast cancer and delay treatment until it was too late.
- The charismatic Weeks drew her enthralled husband into a shared delusion that she's healthy and cancer-free. The decade-long spell is broken at last by a medical emergency that reveals the truth and leads to their final, honest year together. What they did shocked the Harvard medical world.
- Rollins' memoir, *IN SICKNESS* (Post Hill Press / Simon & Schuster) tells the tragic story of what can happen when love draws us in and blinds us to reality. When we hear about echo chambers, they usually involve the news and politics. But they can also exist in relationships. They can come from love and dissolve our senses.
- Dr Rollins was living a rational life, one guided by logic and objectivity. He adhered so firmly to these principles that they became second nature. One day, reality punctured his complacency: he was shocked to find that a part of himself was behaving quite irrationally and his meticulously fabricated world crumbled.
- The drive to fool ourselves can be powerful enough to draw another into the delusion. 19th century French psychologists called this a *folie a deux* - a madness shared by two. The standard US diagnostic manual doesn't recognize the malady but it's precisely what befell Barrett Rollins and Jane Weeks, cancer doctors at Harvard University.

- Dr. Rollins believes relationships can insulate us from the outside world. Do you agree? Have you been in relationships that caused you to miss out on something?
- Why did Dr Weeks choose to hide her disease? Why did Dr Rollins decide to go along with her?
- Did their profession and their closeness to the disease influence the doctors' decision to ignore Jane's diagnosis?
- Has loyalty and devotion ever led to disaster in your own life?
- What echo chambers have you experienced? What circumstances created them? And how were they fueled? Did you participate, or were you viewing it from the outside?
- What questions do you wish you could ask Dr. Weeks?
- Do you believe Dr. Rollins is still responsible for his wife's death? Is he partially responsible? Why or why not?

Read more at:

[www.barrettrollins.com](http://www.barrettrollins.com)

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[www.bmmworldwide.com/folie](http://www.bmmworldwide.com/folie)