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FOREWORD

In *Conquer Back and Neck Pain: Walk It Off!* Dr. Mark Brown brings more than 35 years of clinical and research experience to those of us who are interested in the challenges presented by these most common of musculoskeletal maladies. Dr. Brown has been an international leader in this most important area of healthcare, and we can all benefit from his compassionate approach to his patients.

Back and neck pain are without a doubt the nemesis of the musculoskeletal ailments and account for nearly 100 million episodes per year just in the U.S., with 62 million having back symptoms and 21 million reporting neck symptoms. The impact is realized not only in number of visits to a multitude of healthcare providers, but also in lost productivity as a nation. Back pain accounts for the greatest number of days lost from work, making up the largest part of some \$800 million (direct medical and indirect, work- and home-related) spent annually on musculoskeletal conditions. Lost workdays are most commonly due to low back pain, averaging almost one day per month per injured worker.

As a true clinician scientist, Dr. Brown provides real-life experiences to enlighten us all. He is the consummate patient advocate who presents us with a practical, no-nonsense approach to the diagnosis and treatment of back and neck pain.

Dr. Brown's seven types of neck and back pain remind me of Stephen Covey's seven habits of highly effective people. Covey allows each of us to take more control of our hectic lives and allows us to spend more time in quadrants that are effective and meaningful. Dr. Brown allows us to classify our symptoms in a way that makes

understanding our condition and what to do about it simple and yet doesn't underestimate the symptoms' impact on our lives or those of our families, who need to understand what is wrong, what isn't wrong, and what to do to get better. He helps us to understand how we can take responsibility in a partnership with our doctor and to know "when to walk it off" and "when to call for help."

The role of your family doctor has never been more important, and in most cases he or she is the best front-line diagnostician and your advocate. As an advocate for shared decision-making, or what we at the Dartmouth Institute call "informed choice," Dr. Brown empowers patients with evidence-based knowledge while understanding their values and preferences, serving as a true exemplar of a patient advocate. Dr. Brown's book should be on the bookshelves in each primary care physician's office and serve as a partner to those on the front lines.

What's your activity level? Are you a couch potato, a weekend warrior, an avid runner, or – like me – somewhere in between? Dr. Brown's activity groupings allow us to understand where we are and what we can expect or need to do to change our expectations. Finally, Dr. Brown allows us to be who we are but to challenge ourselves to be better for ourselves, our partners, our families, our friends, and colleagues in the workplace. He teaches us how to be the ruler of our own back and neck symptoms and how not to be ruled by them. He advocates for surgery in special circumstances, and those need to be clear and better understood by all of us. By reading this book we can benefit from Dr. Brown's years of experience and thousands of patient visits summarized so succinctly in this book.

The patient testimonials say it all. Thank you, Dr. Brown, I can *Conquer Back and Neck Pain: Walk It Off!*

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