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Over the years, I have had many opportunities to be an advocate, writer, and teacher connected to important human rights efforts. But I am fairly new to the struggle for access to medicines. My ignorance has one advantage: I have been able to see the campaign for medicine access through an outsider’s eyes. Often, those eyes have stared in bewilderment at the thick layers of complexity and technical language that obscure the core claim of the campaign: access to medicines is a moral imperative and a human right.

Those layers of complexity are applied by defenders of the status quo, who are happy to intimidate the rest of us into throwing up our hands in frustration. But more seasoned advocates confess that they too can lapse into relying on technical vocabulary and little-known references. My hope is that this book serves to dismantle much of that intimidating barrier.

As you may imagine, my ignorance also brought significant disadvantages to this project. I have had a lot to learn. The extent to which I have been able to overcome those disadvantages is to the credit of five groups of people.
The first group is represented in the extensive endnotes. This brief, straightforward book is built on hundreds of references to more in-depth work by others. Those scholars, activists and patients were my teachers in a self-study access-to-medicines master class. They are all deserving of my thanks and of the thanks of all of us who care about increasing access to essential medicines. Some of the most prolific and incisive writers on this topic deserve special recognition, especially Ellen t’Hoen, James Love, and Brook Baker.

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Prescription for the People