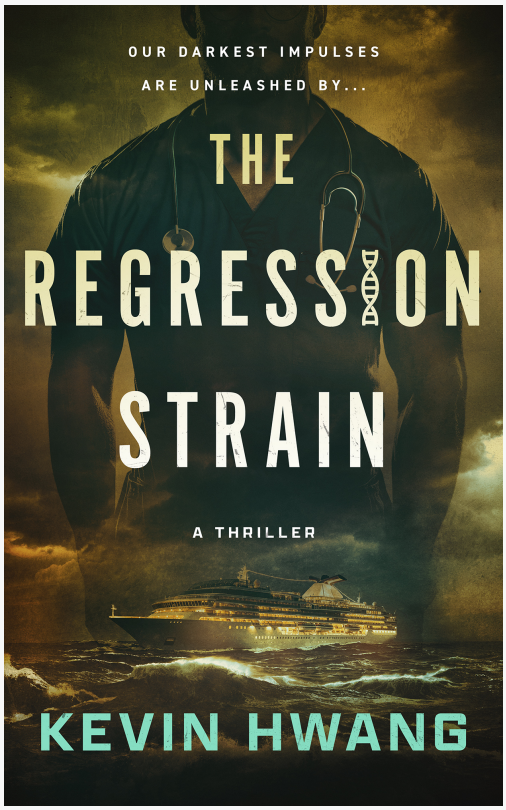
Kevin Hwang’s 'The Regression Strain' Wins Gold Medal in 2025 Readers’ Favorite International Book Award Contest

Medical thriller set aboard a transatlantic cruise ship takes top honors in the general thriller category



The Regression Strain cover

HOUSTON, TX, UNITED STATES, September 4, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In a remarkable debut achievement, Dr. Kevin Hwang's novel "The Regression Strain" has been awarded the Gold Medal in the Fiction - Thriller - General category in the prestigious 2025 Readers' Favorite International Book Award Contest. The medical thriller novel, which combines pulse-pounding suspense and psychological depth, earned top honors in the competition.

"The Regression Strain" follows Dr. Peter Palma, an overwhelmed Houston physician who takes what he hopes will be a restorative job aboard a transatlantic cruise ship sailing from Copenhagen to New York. Instead of treating minor ailments, Peter finds himself confronting a vile affliction that causes people to lose control of their impulses and surrender to primitive urges. As chaos engulfs the ship, Peter must identify the perpetrator behind the scheme while battling his own delirium and the demons of his past.

"I'm deeply honored that 'The Regression Strain' has received this recognition," said Hwang. "The story explores how we maintain our humanity when faced with our most primal instincts, set against the claustrophobic backdrop of a cruise ship where there's nowhere to run. The Readers' Favorite award validates my belief that readers are hungry for intelligent thrillers that don't sacrifice character development for action."

The Readers' Favorite International Book Award Contest is one of the largest book award contests in the industry, receiving entries from authors and publishers around the world. The contest attracts submissions from independent authors, New York Times bestsellers, small publishers, and publishing giants such as HarperCollins, Random House, and Simon & Schuster.

Winners are selected based on overall excellence in writing, with each genre judged separately to ensure fair competition within specific categories.

The novel seamlessly blends clinical authenticity with psychological suspense, creating a unique entry in the thriller genre. Hwang's medical background lends credibility to the clinical elements while his storytelling crafts a narrative that examines themes of guilt, redemption, and the thin line between civilization and savagery.

Reviewer K.C. Finn praised the novel as "a claustrophobic, haunting, and razor-sharp story" and called it "outbreak fiction at its finest." The reviewer noted Hwang's "keen sense of pacing and the art of the reveal" and highlighted how the author "blends science and suspense in this pressure cooker situation."

Hwang brings unique authenticity to the medical thriller genre through his extensive background as a practicing physician and professor of internal medicine. His real-world expertise informs the portrayal of disease progression and medical decision-making under extreme pressure featured in the novel.

"The Regression Strain" is available in digital and print formats on Amazon. The novel has garnered praise for its authentic medical details, complex character development, and relentless pacing that keeps readers engaged from the first page to the shocking conclusion.

About the Author:
Kevin Hwang, MD, is a professor of internal medicine at McGovern Medical School at UTHealth Houston. He sees patients, teaches residents, and maintains an active academic career with work published in leading medical journals. When not practicing medicine or writing, he enjoys chicken enchiladas, index cards, and appropriately sized packaging.

About Readers' Favorite:
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