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His Brother's Keeper
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Do you see continuing advances in medical science more as a threat to our humanity or as an opportunity for new kinds of hope?

I see both threat and hope. But in general I feel more optimistic now than I did a few years ago, when I was living through the action that I describe in this book. At least some of the darkness in my view of the future came from my life at the time: from watching the Heywoods' crisis, and my own family's.

At the end of the book, Stephen seems quite happy even though he is so debilitated by his disease. Do you think that he should have been more aggressive in his own search for a cure or do you believe that he made the best choice by living out the remainder of his life as normally as he was able?

I admire Stephen's choice, and in many ways it was Jamie who made it possible. If Jamie hadn't been racing for a cure, Stephen might have felt less free to devote himself to living.

Would Jamie have had a greater chance for success if he'd been a scientist rather than an engineer?

Maybe. But then he might not have had what he calls his MIT hubris, and his gift for thinking outside the box.

Has there been a change in the way "big pharma" approaches orphan diseases in the last six years or so?

Sadly, big pharma today is even more focused on the blockbuster drug and the bottom line.

Do you think that we live in a time when the very term "orphan disease" should be obsolete?

Yes. So many of these rare diseases are related to common ones. Finding the cause of ALS and PSP may well throw light on Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. In a sense no disease is an orphan; they belong to all of us.