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Dr. Wachter is Professor and Chair of the Department of Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, where he is the Holly Smith Distinguished Professor in Science and Medicine and the Benioff Endowed Chair in Hospital Medicine. The department leads the nation in NIH grants and is generally ranked as one of the nation's best.

Wachter is the author of 250 articles and six books and is a frequent contributor to the New York Times and Wall Street Journal. He coined the term “hospitalist” in 1996 and is often considered the “father” of the hospitalist field—the fastest growing specialty in the history of modern medicine. He is the former President of the Society of Hospital Medicine and former Chair of the American Board of Internal Medicine.

In the safety and quality arenas, he has written two books on the subject, including Understanding Patient Safety, the world's top-selling safety primer. In 2004, he received the John M. Eisenberg Award, the nation's top honor in patient safety. Modern Healthcare has ranked him as one of the 50 most influential physician-executives in the U.S. 13 times; he was number one on the list in 2015. His 2015 book, The Digital Doctor: Hope, Hype and Harm at the Dawn of Medicine's Computer Age, was a New York Times science bestseller. In 2016, he chaired a blue-ribbon commission advising England's National Health Service on its digital strategy. In 2020, his frequent tweets on COVID - 19 were viewed over 50 million times by more than 100,000 followers and served as a trusted source of information on the clinical, public health, and policy issues surrounding the pandemic.