


Bad Pharma: How Drug Companies Mislead Doctors and Harm Patients


By Ben Goldacre



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Medicine is broken. We like to imagine that it's based on evidence and the results of fair tests. In reality, those tests are often profoundly flawed. We like to imagine that doctors are familiar with the research literature surrounding a drug, when in reality much of the research is hidden from them by drug companies. We like to imagine that doctors are impartially educated, when in reality much of their education is funded by industry. We like to imagine that regulators let only effective drugs onto the market, when in reality they approve hopeless drugs, with data on side effects casually withheld from doctors and patients. All these problems have been protected from public scrutiny because they're too complex to capture in a sound bite. But Dr. Ben Goldacre shows that the true scale of this murderous disaster fully reveals itself only when the details are untangled. He believes we should all be able to understand precisely how data manipulation works and how research misconduct on a global scale affects us. In his own words, "the tricks and distortions documented in these pages are beautiful, intricate, and fascinating in their details." With Goldacre's characteristic flair and a forensic attention to detail, Bad Pharma reveals a shockingly broken system and calls for something to be done. This is the pharmaceutical industry as it has never been seen before.

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Editorial Review

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In the follow-up to his popular *Bad Science* (2010), British medical doctor Goldacre reveals how pharmaceutical companies mislead doctors and hurt patients. They “sponsor” trials, which tend to yield favorable results, while negative results often remain unreported. He also reports that drug companies spend twice as much on marketing and advertising as on researching and developing new drugs. Unfortunately for U.S. readers, he focuses largely on the UK, but ghost authorship of studies and “continuing medical education” boondoggle trips for doctors are problematic everywhere, and he does refer to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration on multiple occasions. And everyone, everywhere should feel unsettled by his discovery that pharmaceutical companies funnel \$10 million to \$20 million a year to such major medical journals as the *New England Journal of Medicine* and the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Not surprisingly, he notes, studies funded by the pharmaceutical industry are that much more likely to get published in these influential journals. Goldacre’s essential exposé will prompt readers to ask more questions before automatically popping a doctor-prescribed pill. --Karen Springen

From Bookforum

Bad Pharma is surely the most comprehensive account to date of how the pharmaceutical industry games the regulatory process. Still, *Bad Pharma* is short on practical prescriptions for reform, and it is not until the last ten pages that Goldacre acknowledges that drug companies are manufacturing products that save lives and alleviate pain for billions of people. —Chris Wilson

Review

"A useful guide for policymakers, doctors and the patients who need protection against deliberate disinformation." ---Kirkus

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Daniel Gutierrez:

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