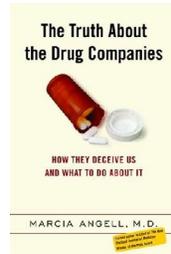


“The Truth About Drug Companies”



Author: Marcia Angell, M.D.

ISBN: 0375508465

Format: Hardcover, 336 pages

Publisher: Random House, 1st ed., August 24, 2004

Date Reviewed: September 10, 2004

“The fact is that this industry is taking us for a ride, and there will be no real reform without an aroused and determined public to make it happen.”

Synopsis:

In 2002, the *New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM)*, one of the most well-respected medical journals in the world, published a shocking editorial. They stated they could no longer find article reviewers who did not have any financial ties to prescription drug companies^[1] and, as a result, would find it very difficult to publish unbiased articles. Now a former editor of the *NEJM* has decided to tell the public what really goes on in the prescription drug industry.

Strengths:

1. As a former editor of the *NEJM*, Dr. Angell has had a front row seat to the workings of the Pharmaceutical Industry and how it has been almost single-handedly responsible for the rising costs and inevitable collapse (in my opinion) of the American Health Care system.
2. The most shocking revelation is the Drug Industry’s lack of producing the “innovative drugs” they say is responsible for their sky-high prices. Yet consider this:

Only 32 of the 314 (10.1%) drugs approved from 2000-2004 were classified as innovative.

The other 90% are called “Me-Too Drugs”. These drugs are small variations of previous drugs that are frequently *worse* than the ones they replace (p. 76). How innovate is that?

3. We get exposed to the frightening reach of the Drug Industry into Congress. From being responsible for preventing Congress from lowering drug prices in the new Medicare bill (p. 194) to the \$2 million they donated to the Republican party (p. 197) to the half a TRILLION dollars it spent on lobbying from 1997 to 2002, the drug company is truly a lobbying monster on Capital Hill.

Weaknesses:

1. If there was one weakness in this book, it’s that it should have been written years ago before the healthcare system spiraled out of control.

Overall Impression:

While Dr. Angell has done a tremendous service to the public by publishing this book, it would have had more of a profound effect if she had published it while still editor of the *Journal*. Now that she is “out of the game” it is highly unlikely any action will be done by organized medicine and will instead lie, as she states in her introduction, on “an aroused and determined public to make it happen.”

Reference:

1. Drazen, J.M. *Financial associations of authors*. N Engl J Med, 2002. 346(24): p. 1901-2.