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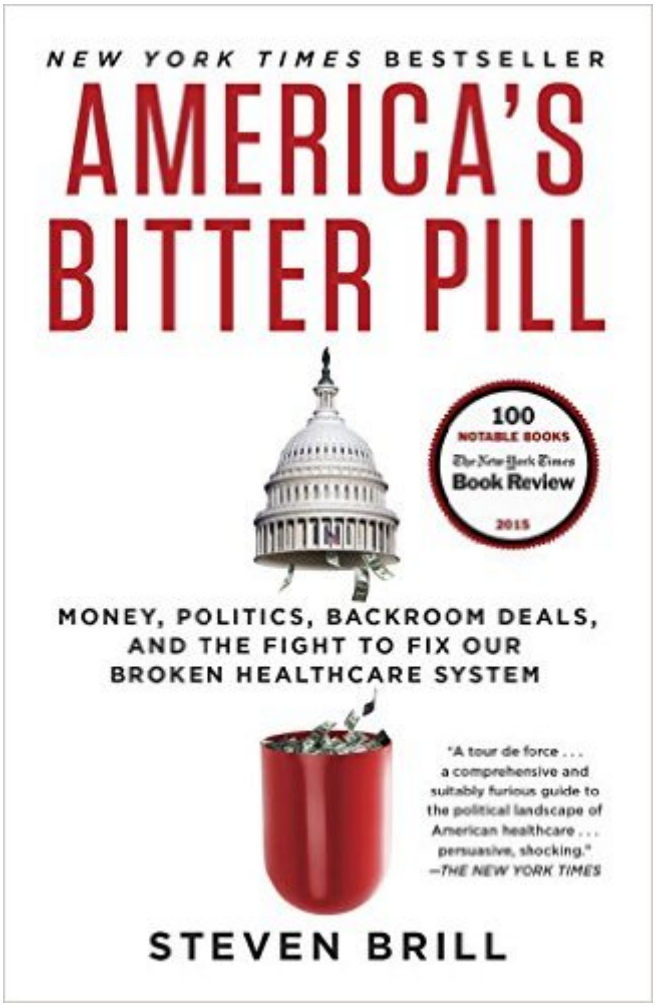
America's Bitter Pill: Money, Politics, Backroom Deals, And The Fight To Fix Our Broken Healthcare System



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Synopsis

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER â ¢ A NEW YORK TIMES NOTABLE BOOK â ¢Â Americaâ ™s Bitter Pill is Steven Brillâ ™s acclaimed book on how the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare, was written, how it is being implemented, and, most important, how it is changingâ ”and failing to changeâ ”the rampant abuses in the healthcare industry. Itâ ™s a fly-on-the-wall account of the titanic fight to pass a 961-page law aimed at fixing Americaâ ™s largest, most dysfunctional industry. Itâ ™s a penetrating chronicle of how the profiteering that Brill first identified in his trailblazing Time magazine cover story continues, despite Obamacare. And it is the first complete, inside account of how President Obama persevered to push through the law, but then failed to deal with the staff incompetence and turf wars that crippled its implementation. Â But by chance Americaâ ™s Bitter Pill ends up being much moreâ ”because as Brill was completing this book, he had to undergo urgent open-heart surgery. Thus, this also becomes the story of how one patient who thinks he knows everything about healthcare â œpolicyâ • rethinks it from a hospital gurneyâ ”and combines that insight with his brilliant reporting. The result: a surprising new vision of how we can fix American healthcare so that it stops draining the bank accounts of our families and our businesses, and the federal treasury. Â Praise for Americaâ ™s Bitter Pill Â â œA tour de force . . . a comprehensive and suitably furious guide to the political landscape of American healthcare . . . persuasive, shocking.â •â ”The New York Times Â â œAn energetic, picaresque, narrative explanation of much of what has happened in the last seven years of health policy . . . [Brill] has pulled off something extraordinary.â •â ”The New York Times Book Review Â â œA thunderous indictment of what Brill refers to as the â ˆtoxicity of our profiteer-dominated healthcare system.â ™ â •â ”Los Angeles Times Â â œA sweeping and spirited new book [that] chronicles the surprisingly juicy tale of reform.â •â ”The Daily Beast Â â œOne of the most important books of our time.â •â ”Walter Isaacson Â â œSuperb . . . Brill has achieved the seemingly impossibleâ ”written an exciting book about the American health system.â •â ”The New York Review of BooksFrom the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

AMERICA'S BITTER PILL is an analysis of the US medical care industry, and how Obamacare was implemented. The perspective of the writer is one of a journalist (and sometimes a patient.) That is, this is not a political issue for him--he doesn't take sides, other than recognizing that health care costs are heading our country for a disaster.The author highlights one big advantage of Obamacare, in that so many more people have insurance than did before: "Basically what Obamacare did was a very good thing. It gave tens of millions more people in this country the opportunity to have health care. And it's a longtime national disgrace that we're the only developed country where tens of millions of our citizens can't get health care..."However, here's the bad news. This expansion in coverage came via expanding the Medicaid program; now, "Taxpayers are paying for tens of millions of new customers to pay the same exorbitant prices and fees that everybody else has been paying." So, while it's great that more people are covered--it's at an unsustainable rate: "We cannot continue to be a country where health care prices are 40, 50, 60 percent higher than they are in every other country where the health care results are as good, or better, than ours. It's unsustainable."On prescription drug prices, the author exposes a "secret," which isn't really much of a secret anymore: "The exact same prescription drug in the United States is typically 40 or 50 percent less in Canada, in the United Kingdom, in France, in Germany and Australia -- in every other country in the world because every other country in the world controls the price of monopoly drugs...

This book contains several parts. In part, it is a detailed account of how our dysfunctional political system struggled to put together the Affordable Care Act (ACA) with the â œhelpâ • of the healthcare industry and its lobbyists. It is in part a detailed account of how the launch of the ACA website was botched by a failure in project management. It is in part the story of how a small group of smart people rescued the website with remarkable speed. It is in part a series of vignettes of the experiences of individual healthcare patients (including the author). It is in part the authorâ ™s idea

of how our present healthcare system might be adjusted to reduce costs. Finally, the book identifies some of the major cost drivers of our present system.Unfortunately, these individual parts of the book do not come together as a coherent whole because, while the authorâ ™s objection to our present system is its high cost, he has chosen to base his book on the legislation and implementation of the ACA whose primary objective is to tackle problems of access to, and denial from, healthcare. While the ACA does also attempt to reduce costs (so far with some success), the root causes of our high cost system will require a much more radical change than is politically feasible at this time. It is a mischaracterization to describe the battle over the ACA as a â œFight to fix our broken healthcare systemâ •; the ACA was only intended to repair some of its most egregious deficiencies. Consequently, the 75% of the book that deals with the ACA is not relevant to Mr. Brillâ ™s well justified concerns over cost: Thus, the core of the book is disconnected from the beginning, the end, and the title.The core of the book, a blow-by-blow account of the development and implementation of the ACA is based on Mr.

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