

Do You Believe In Magic?: The Sense And Nonsense Of Alternative Medicine



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Synopsis

In *Do You Believe in Magic?*, medical expert Paul A. Offit, M.D., offers a scathing exposé of the alternative medicine industry, revealing how even though some popular therapies are remarkably helpful due to the placebo response, many of them are ineffective, expensive, and even deadly. Dr. Offit reveals how alternative medicine is "an unregulated industry under no legal obligation to prove its claims or admit its risks" can actually be harmful to our health. Using dramatic real-life stories, Offit separates the sense from the nonsense, showing why any therapy—alternative or traditional—should be scrutinized. He also shows how some nontraditional methods can do a great deal of good, in some cases exceeding therapies offered by conventional practitioners. An outspoken advocate for science-based health advocacy who is not afraid to take on media celebrities who promote alternative practices, Dr. Offit advises, "There's no such thing as alternative medicine. There's only medicine that works and medicine that doesn't."

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Customer Reviews

Half of all Americans use some form of alternative medicine—megavitamins and supplements, acupuncture, homeopathy, faith healing, chiropractic manipulation. The popularity of these treatments is multifaceted. Many people believe "natural" remedies are safer and better than formulated pharmaceuticals. Some folks crave the personalized attention and extended time that alternative healers provide compared to conventional doctors, who might be hurried or aloof. Still others find alternative therapies to be spiritual and empowering. Physician Offit counters,

â œDonâ™t give alternative medicine a free pass.â • Concentrate on the evidence. Any treatmentâ ”conventional or alternativeâ ”should be subjected to high standards of proof. The influence of money, celebrities, and politics props up alternative medicine. Desperation sometimes plays a role, too, as does disenchantment with mainstream medicine. He cites solid scientific studies that refute any benefit of vitamin C, ginkgo biloba, and saw palmetto in preventing the common cold, memory loss, or urinary symptoms, respectively. Offit praises the power of the placebo responseâ ”a major reason why some alternative medicine treatments actually work. --Tony Miksanek

â œImportant and timely . . . Offit writes in a lucid and flowing style, and grounds a wealth of information within forceful and vivid narratives. This makes his argument - that we should be guided by science - accessible to a wide audience.â • (New Republic)â œLively. . . . Informative and well-written, the book deserves a wide audience among the general public, scientists, and health care professionals.â • (Science)â œConvincing.â • (Forbes)â œThis excellent, easy-to-read look at the alternative-medicine industry is highly recommended.â • (Library Journal (starred review))â œDo You Believe in Magic? is a briskly written, entertaining, and well-researched examination of those whom Offit considers â ^unclothed emperorsâ™: purveyors of miracle cancer cures, fountains of youth, and the theory that vaccines cause autism.â • (Boston Globe)â œOver the last decade [Offit] has become a leading debunker of mass misconceptions surrounding infections and vaccines, and now he is taking on the entire field of alternative medicine, from acupuncture to vitamins.â • (New York Times)â œOffit is a wonderful storyteller who makes his message come alive. Each chapter is a story that grabs the readerâ™s interest and holds it.â • (Skeptical Inquirer)â œA fascinating history of hucksters, and a critical chronology of how supplements escaped regulation. . . . A bravely unsentimental and dutifully researched guide for consumers to distinguish between quacks and a cure.â • (Publishers Weekly (starred review))â œA rousing good read, strong on human interest and filled with appalling and amazing data.â • (Kirkus Reviews (starred review))â œOffit is a rare combination of scientist, doctor, communicator and advocate. . . . What is needed is more people like [him] willing to engage the skeptics in a debate that just will not go away.â • (Financial Times, on Deadly Choices)â œFew scientists are willing to touch this third rail of science publicity; Offit grabs it with two hands.â • (Newsweek, on Autism's False Prophets)â œAn invaluable chronicle that relates some of the many ways in which the vulnerabilities of anxious parents have been exploited.â • (Wall Street Journal, on Autism's False Prophets)

Interesting read giving reader lots to think about. Shows both sides of this story between modern medicine and alternative Medicine.

An excellent fact based expose of a problematic industry.

A must read if you're into fitness and are currently taking supplements!

I've often wondered where certain alternative treatments came from, and whether they were worth the expense and effort. I've thrown more than a few useless and expensive remedies away in fits of anger both at myself and the ND, nutritionist, acupuncturist or chiropractor who recommended them so confidently. While not a complete collection of the bad actors out there, this is a well written highlight reel of the worst offenders to avoid, who knowingly play on our vulnerability in our darkest hours.

Funny to read about all the health craze we have all heard of in a clear and concise way. However, the read is a bit heavy because if so many examples shared. You get the point after one or two. No need for 10 of them.

Very fun read.

I think that this is a very interesting book. His sources are cited making it easy to look up the research.

Please, PLEASE, read this book before you buy all the holistic junk medicine out there. Or, if you really can't spare the time, here's a shortcut: any time you see a supplement that has the words "These claims have not been verified by the FDA and is not intended to diagnose or treat any disease" it means the product is junk and a waste of money. The only value is as a placebo--that is, if you really truly believe the product will help you then it will, somewhat. But then so would a sugar pill.

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