

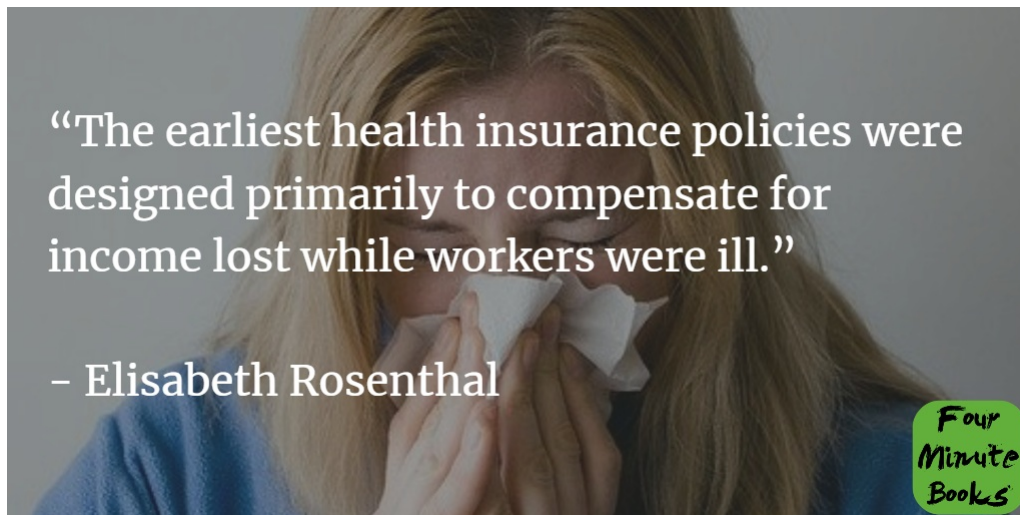
An American Sickness Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *An American Sickness* will motivate you to see what you can do to help improve the state of healthcare in the United States by blowing open the recent greed, corruption, and selfishness of healthcare companies.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



In the fall of 2017, my daughter was born six weeks early and spent a couple of weeks in the neonatal intensive care unit. It was a stressful time for all of us. Thankfully, my daughter did really well and is healthy and happy today.

But we had to relive the nightmare when a few months afterward. In spite of trying to work with the hospital beforehand, they sent us a \$50,000 hospital bill.

I still remember the fear, especially when the hospital said all they could do was offer to let me make payments of nearly \$1400 a month for 3 years. I was furious, and it took months of dealing with their incompetent billing department to work out a reasonable solution.

My family and I got lucky, but many American's aren't. Some have to leave the country for affordable healthcare, and others sadly have to make the choice between a life of poverty and death. All because of our broken healthcare system.

Elisabeth Rosenthal dives into the muck of why these atrocities exist in her book *An American Sickness: How Healthcare Became Big Business and How You Can Take It Back*.

Here are 3 of the lessons this book teaches that made me the angriest:

1. Hospitals in the US are run more like businesses than the institutions that save lives that they should be.
2. Pharmaceutical companies maintain their big profits by exploiting patent laws and prices.
3. Money is more important to healthcare corporations than taking care of people.

Get your pitchforks and torches ready because, after this, you're going to want to storm the nearest healthcare building! Let's dive right in!

Lesson 1: Hospitals should be places that focus on saving lives, but instead they run more like businesses.

The United States healthcare industry began around 1900. Hospitals were started by religious groups as charitable institutions. An insurance policy was simply a way to alleviate the burden of lost income while people were sick. These companies were non-profit, but that all changed in the 1950s.

Americans purchase rate of health insurance policies jumped by 60 percent. This was a clear signal that it was big business, and that's been the condition of healthcare ever since.

As awful as it sounds, hospitals even began to hire business consultants in the 70s.

They could have been bringing on people to help them make people better, but instead, they just wanted more money.

"Strategic pricing" is just one shameful tactic that they began implementing to optimize profits. And the patients are the ones who suffer for it.

One woman had to deal with a \$44,000 bill after getting surgery to remove an ectopic pregnancy. The statement listed the procedure as "miscellaneous." This intentional obscurity is one way that hospital accountants maximize profits. Gross, huh? It gets worse.

They also began giving doctors incentives to call for more expensive treatments and procedures. Those that charged their patients more made more money. And units of hospitals that didn't perform as well financially were outsourced. All to give room for expanding those parts that made more money.

Lesson 2: Manipulation of prices and patent laws are common practices of greedy pharmaceutical companies.

A pharmaceutical company is what makes and sells the drugs that a doctor prescribes to help you get better. While their origins and original purposes were similar to that of hospitals, they are unfortunately also just as selfish.

Antibiotics used to cost just a few dollars and vaccines prices were just pennies. But now pharmaceutical companies try to raise the prices as high as possible while patients watch helplessly.

If you have ulcers in the United Kingdom, you might pay about \$12 for the drug to treat it. **But in the United States, the same prescription costs anywhere from \$700 to \$1,200.** This is making some people leave the US to go to other countries just to stay alive and not become dirt poor.

Perhaps the most famous case of greed in the pharmaceutical industry is what Martin Shkreli did when he bought the rights to a drug that helps treat HIV. He's now the main name associated with big pharma's gluttony because he raised the price of just a single pill of the drug from \$13.50 to \$750.

But wait, you might be thinking, shouldn't that be illegal? Sadly, these conniving companies are experts at dodging the law. They take ingredients without patents and use them to make "new" drugs to do this same thing with. They'll even combine old drugs into new ones to make this work.

Lesson 3: Patient care takes a backseat to profit in many healthcare corporations in the US.

52 percent of American's debt is from overdue medical bills according to 2014 research. The study also found that one in five US citizen's credit scores had taken a hit due to medical debt.

There's a lot of reasons for this, but the simplest reason is that in the United States, the healthcare system is run just like big business.

Just take the terminology that professionals in the field use as an example. Instead of "patients," they treat "consumers." And it's no longer "illnesses" they're looking into, but "high-value disease states" that they can make more money from.

If all of this inhumanity is enough to make your blood boil, just wait until what you hear next. One Harvard Medical School doctor by the name of Denise Faustman was researching ways to treat type 1 diabetes. **Shamefully, not a single one of the associations for diabetes research would pay for it simply because it didn't have any opportunity for commercial profit.**

These big businesses, I mean health care institutions, would rather make more money off of a lifetime of treatment than find a cure for the disease. If you've got diabetes or some other ailment, you might have to deal with it your entire life because these companies are throttling research that could end it just so they can make more money.

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An American Sickness Review

Oh, boy, did this one get me angry about the current state of healthcare in the US. I can't believe the level of greed and corruption that *An American Sickness* reveals! It is important to recognize that a lot of doctors are frustrated by this as well and hopefully this can motivate us all to work together to fix this huge problem.

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Who would I recommend the An American Sickness summary to?

The 34-year-old with a chronic illness that is having a hard time staying afloat financially, the 56-year-old doctor that would like to find ways to help their patients other than just medical care, and every single person who is in any governmental position with the power to change these atrocities.