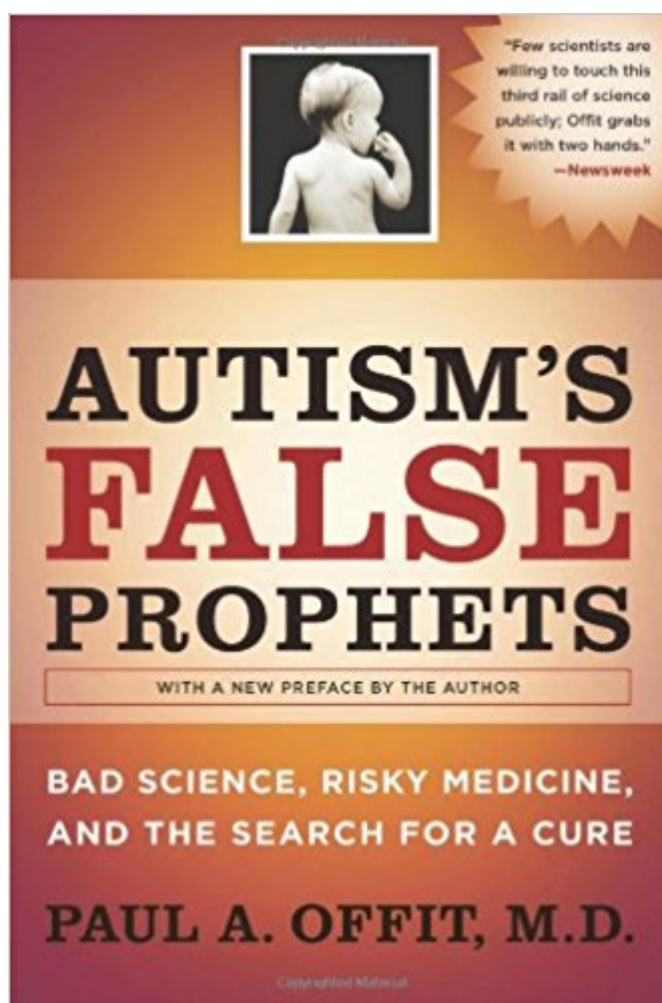


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Autism's False Prophets: Bad Science, Risky Medicine, And The Search For A Cure



Synopsis

A London researcher was the first to assert that the combination measles-mumps-rubella vaccine known as MMR caused autism in children. Following this "discovery," a handful of parents declared that a mercury-containing preservative in several vaccines was responsible for the disease. If mercury caused autism, they reasoned, eliminating it from a child's system should treat the disorder. Consequently, a number of untested alternative therapies arose, and, most tragically, in one such treatment, a doctor injected a five-year-old autistic boy with a chemical in an effort to cleanse him of mercury, which stopped his heart instead. Children with autism have been placed on stringent diets, subjected to high-temperature saunas, bathed in magnetic clay, asked to swallow digestive enzymes and activated charcoal, and injected with various combinations of vitamins, minerals, and acids. Instead of helping, these therapies can hurt those who are most vulnerable, and particularly in the case of autism, they undermine childhood vaccination programs that have saved millions of lives. An overwhelming body of scientific evidence clearly shows that childhood vaccines are safe and does not cause autism. Yet widespread fear of vaccines on the part of parents persists. In this book, Paul A. Offit, a national expert on vaccines, challenges the modern-day false prophets who have so egregiously misled the public and exposes the opportunism of the lawyers, journalists, celebrities, and politicians who support them. Offit recounts the history of autism research and the exploitation of this tragic condition by advocates and zealots. He considers the manipulation of science in the popular media and the courtroom, and he explores why society is susceptible to the bad science and risky therapies put forward by many antivaccination activists.

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Customer Reviews

Attempting to answer the enormous frustration and unhappiness of parents "tired of watching their autistic children improve at rates so slow it's hard to tell if they are improving at all," pediatrics professor and vaccine researcher Offit explores purported causes and cures. Examining false approaches like facilitated communication ("a massive, nationwide delusion") and secretin injections ("no better than salt water"), and mistaken theories of origin (the MMR vaccine, thimerosal), Offit pleads with journalists to resist the lure of "dramatic headlines, advertising dollars, and ratings" rather than report an unconfirmed or untrustworthy study. The only worthwhile studies, Offit purports, are those meeting three criteria: "transparency of the funding source, internal consistency of the data, and reproducibility of the findings." Overall, Offit's text seems unbalanced: though he takes on the "\$40-billion-a-year" alternative medicine industry, he's largely silent on the much larger pharmaceutical industry; and after 10 chapters of debunking the "false prophets," there's just one brief chapter on what is known about autism causes and cures. A thorough and convincing debunker, however, Offit will likely leave parents still hunting for information, albeit better armed to find it. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Every child has a right to be vaccinated against deadly diseases. We started Every Child By Two to protect children from diseases. It didn't occur to me that I would also have to protect them from misinformation about life-saving vaccines. Paul A. Offit's book sets the facts straight. (Rosalynn Carter, former first lady, cofounder of Every Child By Two)Autism's False Prophets is a compelling story of heartbroken parents, understandably desperate for an explanation of autism, being taken in by false hopes unsupported by genuine science. This book goes to the heart of a question that affects every aspect of American culture and political life. Are public policies to be determined by evidence and reason or by emotions that, however intense they may be, have nothing to do with reality? (Susan Jacoby, author of The Age of American Unreason)A definitive analysis of a dangerous and unnecessary controversy that has put the lives of children at risk. Paul A. Offit shows how bad science can take hold of the public consciousness and lead to personal decisions that endanger the health of small children. Every parent who has doubts about the wisdom of vaccinating their kids should read this book. (Peter C. Doherty, Ph.D., St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital and Nobel Laureate in Medicine for fundamental contributions in Immunology)In his latest book Paul A. Offit unfolds the story of autism, infectious diseases, and immunization that has captivated our attention for the last decade. His lively account explores the intersection of science, special interests, and personal courage. It is provocative reading for anyone whose life has

been touched by the challenge of autism spectrum disorders. (Susan K. Klein, MD, Ph.D., Case Western Reserve Hospital, and Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital, Case Medical Center)[A] thoughtful and readable study. (Library Journal (starred review))Enlightening, highly readable and... timely. (Rahul K. Parikh, M.D. Salon.com)Arguably the most courageous and most knowledgeable scientist about vaccines in the United States. (Robert Goldberg New York Post)[Dr. Offit] has done a huge public service by exposing the tragic and dangerous place the anti-vaccine hysteria has taken us. (Huntly Collins Philadelphia Inquirer)An invaluable chronicle that relates some of the many ways in which the vulnerabilities of anxious parents have been exploited. (Linda Seebach Wall Street Journal)A good read and an important piece of work. (Lisa Jo Rudy About.com)More than a book about a disease, it is an ode to uncorrupted science and a cautionary tale that data alone is never enough. (SEED magazine)[Offit] provides important insight into the fatal flaws of the key arguments of vaccine alarmists. (Buffalo News)A very good read. (Dom Giordano The Bulletin)A sobering indictment. (Isabelle Rapin, M.D. Neurology Today)Highly recommended. (Choice)A fascinating read... Eloquent and clearly written. (Stan L. Block, MD Infectious Diseases in Children)A very helpful book for both medical personnel and parents. (The New England Journal of Medicine)The book is a fantastic read. I recommend it to all physicians and their patients and families. (Brian Alverson, MD Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine)This is a powerful book which should be read by all professionals working in the area of medicine. (Michael Fitzgerald Social History of Medicine)Paul A. Offit is one of the most respected scientists and clinicians in a field of vital importance to public health. (Patricia M. Rodier BioScience)[This] book doesn't just show that the anti-vaccine activists are wrong; it attempts to explain why, in our culture, they tend to win. (Jason Fagone Philadelphia Magazine)Detailed but easily readable... should be required reading for any parents who are considering denying vaccination to their children. (Communication: The Magazine of the National Autistic Society)Arguably the most detailed and thorough history available of the current anti-vaccine movement. (Roy Richard Grinker Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders)[A] must-read... it will keep pediatricians and pediatric neurologists awake over the nightmarish possibilities of pseudoscience in the 21st century. (Roger A. Brumback, M.D. Journal of Child Neurology)The vast range of professionals who may be enriched, professionally, by the book's contents extends to: psychologists, psychiatrists, neurologists, neuroscientists, speech pathologists, pediatricians, primary care physicians, geneticists, virologists, immunologists, vaccine experts, nurses, infectious disease experts, internists, gastroenterologists, epidemiologists, public health professionals, special education teachers, bioethicists, biochemists, biologists, biostatisticians, endocrinologists, pharmacists, pharmacologists, pharmaceutical industry

professionals, health policy makers, journalists, politicians, and trial lawyers. (Leo Uzych Metapsychology) Seeking to help readers realize the truth about Autism, Autism's False Prophets is a much needed read, not to be missed. (Midwest Book Review)

A wonderful, enlightening book on an increasingly critical subject. Paul Offit is a great writer and knows the subject of medicine and pseudoscience inside and out. I gave this book to several vaccine-skeptical relatives and hope it will enlighten them on the issue.

Thanks.

Very informative and a great read. Thank you for your tireless quest for increased scientific literacy.

Very interesting read. Anyone interested in the issues swirling around the field of autism should read this book.

Really hits to the heart of the matter and uses logic reason and fact to show why people fall for pseudoscience and how it takes a toll on public health. Dr Offit does this without demonizing misled parents and exposes the frauds for what they really are.

Great book!

An intellectual and historical account of the fraud behind the autism-vaccine scare. If you have kids, are planning to have kids, know somebody who does, or are just interested in the reality behind ideas that can end up causing great harm (unvaccinated kids) then this is a book for you.

In my review of Paul Offit's "Autism's False Prophets", I have described it as a "must read" book. But this is only true for some people. For those in the medical and allied professions who understand the scientific process, hypothesis, testing and study results (a group I am a part of) this book makes a fascinating summary of a very controversial topic. For those who have decided that the real causes of Autism are being hidden and denied by the medical profession, the Government and corporate interests; in other words, people who have made up their minds about Autism and refuse to accept current medical thinking: don't waste your time- this book will only make you angry. But for those readers who are unsure...who think there may be some truth in the assertion that vaccines

cause Autism...or that mercury preservatives cause Autism...or that there are some alternative therapies that can cure Autism but are shunned by mainstream medicine: this book is a MUST read for them. Paul Offit takes the reader through the whole sad saga of the Autism debate and presents a cogent and reasoned argument for why the evidence overwhelmingly points to the fact that vaccines or their components do not cause Autism. The sad fact is that the Autism debate has been hijacked by parents who, while deeply loving their children, and wanting to do anything to help them, have been swayed by emotive and unscientific pronouncements, all of which can cause more heartache. Paul Offit presents the scientific facts about Autism: and for such an emotive topic, arguments free of emotion or vested interest, other than the truth, are sorely needed. Very highly recommended.

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