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Pultizer Prize nominee Alison Bass offers the true story of a landmark case that exposed greed, corruption, and negligence in the pharmaceutical industry

SIDE EFFECTS: A Bestselling Drug on Trial

by Alison Bass

“This is the riveting story of how one of the world's largest drug companies and a few university researchers on its payroll suppressed evidence that a top-selling antidepressant might actually be dangerous in adolescents. It's also the very human story of how two courageous and persistent women made sure the world learned about it. Reads like a good novel, with lessons that go well beyond this case.”

—Marcia Angell, M. D., Senior Lecturer in Social Medicine, Harvard Medical School,
Former editor-in-chief, *New England Journal of Medicine*

“A richly detailed account of the disgraceful self-serving ties between drug companies and the psychiatric profession, as told through stories about the heroes, villains and victims in this drama. An engrossing read and a valuable contribution to public understanding of the need for reform.”

—Arnold S. Relman, M.D., Professor Emeritus of Medicine and of Social Medicine,
Harvard Medical School and Former Editor, *New England Journal of Medicine*

Side Effects is the true story of a groundbreaking court case and the personal drama that surrounded the making and unmasking of a bestselling drug.

With meticulous research, Alison Bass lays out the insidious connections between pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline (the maker of the antidepressant Paxil) a top Ivy League research institution (Brown University), and the government agency designed to protect the public (the FDA)—relationships that would ultimately compromise the health and safety of vulnerable children.

Why this story is so important:

- Paxil was the best-selling antidepressant in the world in 2002, with sales of \$3.3 billion worldwide.

(OVER)

- Pediatric prescriptions for Paxil soared in the U.S. even though there was no hard evidence the drug performed any better than sugar pills in treating depression in children and adolescents.
- The authors of an influential Paxil trial in adolescents misrepresented data in order to minimize the suicide-related risks of the antidepressant, allowing GSK to mislead physicians and consumers about the safety and efficacy of Paxil.
- The New York Attorney General's case was the very first lawsuit filed against the pharmaceutical industry for consumer fraud and paved the way for other states to reign in the excesses of pharmaceutical companies when the federal government refused to protect citizens.
- The settlement against GSK created an environment in which other drugs, including Vioxx, whose safety had not been properly disclosed, were pulled from the market; it also called for the public posting of all drug studies and additional black box warnings on certain medications, something that the pharmaceutical industry had fought against for years.

SIDE EFFECTS introduces us to a fabulous cast of characters: a feisty district attorney in the mold of Erin Brockevitch who takes on big pharma and wins; a courageous whistleblower whose own child suffers from mental illness; a controversial medical researcher being paid by the drug companies whose products he's testing; and of course the victims—those whose suffering was intensified by greed, negligence, and deception within the medical establishment.

Alison Bass—a Pulitzer Prize nominee for her investigative journalism—has covered medicine, science, and technology for the *Boston Globe* and other publications, including the *Miami Herald*, *Psychology Today*, and *Technology Review*. She has received top media awards from the National Mental Health Association and the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, and an Associated Press First Place Award. She has taught journalism courses at Boston and Brandeis universities and lives in Newton, Massachusetts.

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