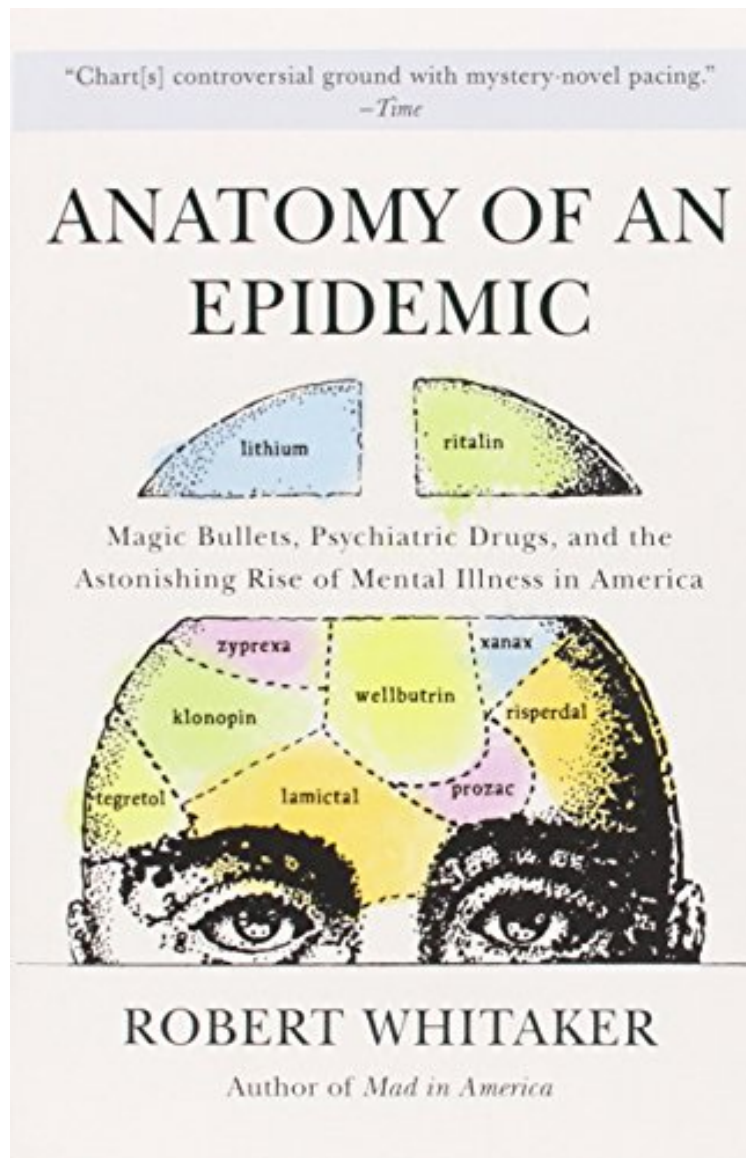


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Anatomy of an Epidemic: Magic Bullets, Psychiatric Drugs, and the Astonishing Rise of Mental Illness in America

Robert Whitaker

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#17218 in Books Robert Whitaker 2011-08-02 2011-08-02 Original language: English PDF # 1 7.97 x .88 x 5.171, .73 #File Name: 0307452425432 pages Anatomy of an Epidemic Magic Bullets Psychiatric Drugs and the Astonishing Rise of Mental Illness in America | File size: 74.Mb

Robert Whitaker : Anatomy of an Epidemic: Magic Bullets, Psychiatric Drugs, and the Astonishing Rise of Mental Illness in America before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Anatomy of an Epidemic: Magic Bullets, Psychiatric Drugs, and the Astonishing Rise of Mental Illness in

America:

53 of 53 people found the following review helpful. The best science on the market for this industryBy CorinnaVery science based. There's a bunch of reviews on here that say this book is invalid, but when you dig into their reasons, they are cherry picking data and using disproven research. For instance, a lot of critics of this book say, "Oh, of course antipsychotics help people," and they cite a few studies. But when you look at those studies, it's where people have been dropped cold turkey off meds they had taken long term. Well, cold turkey withdrawal of psych meds is a hard and nasty process. So of course leaving people on drugs works better than dropping them suddenly into cold turkey withdrawal. But gradual withdrawal does work, and many people have gotten their lives back by learning how to use psych drugs appropriately as a tool instead of as the entire solution. Whitaker is not anti-medication, many of his supporters still use medications. Whitaker is not anti-psychiatry. He is anti-bullshit. Many psychiatrists support him, and are referenced in this book. But only the ones who have actually taken the time to learn the academic research in their own field. Don't believe the critics who cite 2-3 studies and think they have discredited this book without looking into details. This book cites like 400 studies, works with all the best patient advocates in the industry, and is the best science has to offer to explain both problems and solutions. If you want to know the real deal, this is the book to read. Most critiques of this book are very shallow, and have already been readily and easily disproven. 64 of 66 people found the following review helpful. An "insider's" point of viewBy MarilynMany of the harshest reviews of this book seem to be coming from those who currently depend on psychiatric medications, and find the author's conclusions heartless, given their own distress. As a person diagnosed with MDD (major depressive disorder) 22 years ago, and medicated with a substantial cocktail of psych drugs for 20 years after that diagnosis, I want to add my perspective to this discussion. My life is better without the medications. I can't say that will be true for everyone, but it is true for me. I read Robert Whitaker's book almost two years ago, and his conclusions alarmed me. I also had to honestly wonder, do I really feel better on all these medications than I would without them? I had been told by well-respected psychiatrists at two major research universities that the only way to prevent recurring depressive episodes was to be on medication for life. I had believed them, and taken the medications. I felt reasonably okay a lot of the time, though somewhat dulled and flattened by the meds. But I still had debilitating depressive episodes, sometimes lasting for months, in spite of the medications. As I looked around at my many, many friends and family members on psychiatric medications, it seemed to me that most of them were still pretty substantially depressed a lot of the time. For years I had found the notion of "chemical imbalance" reassuring. The solution to my mental distress medication was no different than if I had diabetes and needed insulin, apparently! Taking psych meds with this perspective makes you feel that you are doing your best to take care of yourself, which is reassuring when you're still feeling awful. You're doing what you can do. "Better living through chemistry!" I used to wryly joke, as I'd down my cocktail of three or more medications every night. I regularly saw my psychiatrist, who would tweak the meds here and there to give me better relief. How sad that the "chemical imbalance" theory just doesn't hold up to actual research! I understand how doctors came to use that analogy to reassure patients who were alarmed at the prospect of being on mind-altering drugs for long periods of time. But there are no chemicals being balanced here. The drug effects are powerful, but they are not restoring what is missing and replicating a healthy brain. That truth, well researched in this book, needs to be told. After reading "Anatomy of an Epidemic" two years ago, I was convinced that I at least needed to try life without medications. My husband is a physician, and he found the research in the book compelling as well. I did a very slow, careful taper off of my psych drugs, over a period of months (this part is absolutely crucial). The side effects of withdrawing were physically painful at times, but I got through them. I've been off psychiatric medication for over a year and a half, and I feel really good. Do I still get depressed? Yes, sometimes I do. But certainly not more depressed than I did on the medications. I really appreciate having the full range of my emotional reactions restored to me. It's dreary having the ecstatic side of life chopped off, along with the abject misery. Drugs do that. And psychiatric medications have frightening long-term consequences, some of which are only coming to light now that people have been on them for decades. If medications are truly needed, in most cases they should be temporary, not long-term. Life is hard, stress is real, and problems need to be dealt with. There is no magic bullet. I have found daily aerobic exercise to be a far more reliable way of mitigating depression than my former medications, and research in this book shows this to be true for a majority of people as well. Mindfulness meditation has also helped, and kind people who listen to me. I don't blame my doctors for my years of overmedication. They were doing the best they knew how for me, given the way that training is passed down doctor-to-doctor through medical education. The "medical model" of psychiatry saved that branch of medicine from dying out, given our insurance-based healthcare system, and Robert Whitaker does a great job of exposing the collusion between the pharmaceutical companies and the American Psychiatric Association, with its frightening consequences. I found the section of the book describing the way research evidence was "rewritten" for medical school textbooks truly alarming. There's a lot at stake here for the psychiatric profession; it's not surprising that so many psychiatrists turn from this research with alarm and denial. I admire Robert Whitaker for bringing this problem to light, and for doggedly pursuing it both in the US and internationally. I recommend his website "Mad in America" for recent news and discussion. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Better

than expected. By Customer I purchased this book as part of a personal project and, the further I get in it, the more interested I am. Robert Whitaker does a great job of using the facts to show his point and pointing out flaws with many medications and techniques that are still used today. The material is shocking and displayed in an entertaining way. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in medication, psychology, psychiatry, or any related fields. It does get a bit dense with numbers and studies at times, but as long as you can understand it all, it's no problem.

Now with bonus material, including a new foreword and afterword with updated research. In this astonishing and startling book, award-winning science and history writer Robert Whitaker investigates a medical mystery: Why has the number of disabled mentally ill in the United States tripled over the past two decades? Every day, 1,100 adults and children are added to the government disability rolls because they have become newly disabled by mental illness, with this epidemic spreading most rapidly among our nations children. What is going on? *Anatomy of an Epidemic* challenges readers to think through that question themselves. First, Whitaker investigates what is known today about the biological causes of mental disorders. Do psychiatric medications fix chemical imbalances in the brain, or do they, in fact, create them? Researchers spent decades studying that question, and by the late 1980s, they had their answer. Readers will be startled and dismayed to discover what was reported in the scientific journals. Then comes the scientific query at the heart of this book: During the past fifty years, when investigators looked at how psychiatric drugs affected long-term outcomes, what did they find? Did they discover that the drugs help people stay well? Function better? Enjoy good physical health? Or did they find that these medications, for some paradoxical reason, increase the likelihood that people will become chronically ill, less able to function well, more prone to physical illness? This is the first book to look at the merits of psychiatric medications through the prism of long-term results. Are long-term recovery rates higher for medicated or unmedicated schizophrenia patients? Does taking an antidepressant decrease or increase the risk that a depressed person will become disabled by the disorder? Do bipolar patients fare better today than they did forty years ago, or much worse? When the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) studied the long-term outcomes of children with ADHD, did they determine that stimulants provide any benefit? By the end of this review of the outcomes literature, readers are certain to have a haunting question of their own: Why have the results from these long-term studies all of which point to the same startling conclusion been kept from the public? In this compelling history, Whitaker also tells the personal stories of children and adults swept up in this epidemic. Finally, he reports on innovative programs of psychiatric care in Europe and the United States that are producing good long-term outcomes. Our nation has been hit by an epidemic of disabling mental illness, and yet, as *Anatomy of an Epidemic* reveals, the medical blueprints for curbing that epidemic have already been drawn up.

From Booklist *Starred* When Whitaker (*Mad in America*, 2002) learned that between 1987 and 2007 the number of Americans disabled due to mental illness more than doubled despite a whopping \$40 billion annual psychotropic drug tab, it gave him pause. Given their widespread use greater than even that of cholesterol-lowering drugs he had believed that psychopharmaceuticals were magic bullets, knocking mental illness out of the game, returning formerly disabled people to the ranks of productive citizens. But the deeper he probed into clinical studies in prestigious scientific journals, some dating back more than 50 years, the more he noticed a shocking anomaly. Psychiatric drugs have repeatedly been shown to worsen mental illness, to say nothing of the risks of liver damage, weight gain, elevated cholesterol and blood sugar, and reduced cognitive function they entail. The reality, he says, is that, because no one knows what causes mental illness, there's no cure or palliation to be found in these pills. What with the conclusions Whitaker draws from his assembled literature and the accusations he levels at those who consciously deceive consumers eager for magical cures, his book will either blow the lid off a multibillion-dollar industry or cause him to be labeled a crackpot and, perhaps, medicated into obscurity. At the very least, it should prod those who take the drugs to question those who prescribe them. --Donna Chavez **NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER** The timing of Robert Whitaker's *Anatomy of an Epidemic*, a comprehensive and highly readable history of psychiatry in the United States, couldn't be better. Salon.com *Anatomy of an Epidemic* offers some answers, charting controversial ground with mystery-novel pacing. TIME.com Lucid, pointed and important, *Anatomy of an Epidemic* should be required reading for anyone considering extended use of psychiatric medicine. Whitaker is at the height of his powers. Greg Critser, author of *Generation Rx* Why are so many more people disabled by mental illness than ever before? Why are those so diagnosed dying 10-25 years earlier than others? In *Anatomy of an Epidemic* investigative reporter Robert Whitaker cuts through flawed science, greed and outright lies to reveal that the drugs hailed as the cure for mental disorders instead worsen them over the long term. But Whitaker's investigation also offers hope for the future: solid science backs nature's way of healing our mental ills through time and human relationships. Whitaker tenderly interviews children and adults who bear witness to the ravages of mental illness, and testify to their newly found aliveness when freed from the prison of mind-numbing drugs. Daniel Dorman, M.D., Clinical Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, UCLA School of Medicine and author of *Dantes Cure: A Journey Out of Madness* This is the most alarming book I've read in years. The approach is neither polemical nor ideologically slanted. Relying on medical evidence and historical documentation, Whitaker builds his case like a prosecuting attorney. Carl Elliott, M.D., Ph.D., Professor, Center for

Bioethics, University of Minnesota and author of *Better than Well: American Medicine Meets the American Dream*
Anatomy of an Epidemic investigates a profoundly troubling question: do psychiatric medications increase the likelihood that people taking them, far from being helped, are more likely to become chronically ill? In making a compelling case that our current psychotropic drugs are causing as much if not more harm than good, Robert Whitaker reviews the scientific literature thoroughly, demonstrating how much of the evidence is on his side. There is nothing unorthodox here; this case is solid and evidence-backed. If psychiatry wants to retain its credibility with the public, it will now have to engage with the scientific argument at the core of this cogently and elegantly written book. David Healy, M.D., Professor of Psychiatry, Cardiff University and author of *The Antidepressant Era* and *Let Them Eat Prozac*
Anatomy of an Epidemic is a splendidly informed, wonderfully readable corrective to the conventional wisdom about the biological bases and biological cures for mental illness. This is itself a wise and necessary book, essential reading for all those who have experienced, or care for those who have experienced, mental illness which means all of us! Robert Whitaker is a reliable, sensible, and persuasive, guide to the paradoxes and complexities of what we know about mental illness, and what we might be able to do to lessen the suffering it brings. Jay Neugeboren, author of *Imagining Robert* and *Transforming Madness* Every so often a book comes along that exposes a vast deceit. Robert Whitaker has written that sort of book. Drawing on a prodigious quantity of psychiatric literature as well as heart-rending stories of individual patients, he exposes a deeply disturbing fraud perpetrated by the drug industry and much of modern psychiatry at horrendous human and financial cost to patients, their families, and society as a whole. Scrupulously reported and written in compelling but unemotional style, this book shreds the myth woven around today's psychiatric drugs. Nils Bruzelius, former science editor for the *Boston Globe* and the *Washington Post* A devastating critique. . . . One day, we will look back at the way we think about and treat mental illness and wonder if we were all mad. *Anatomy of an Epidemic* should be required reading for both patients and physicians. Shannon Brownlee, senior research fellow, New America Foundation and author of *Overtreated*
About the Author
ROBERT WHITAKER is the author of *Mad in America*, *The Mapmakers Wife*, and *On the Laps of Gods*, all of which won recognition as notable books of the year. His newspaper and magazine articles on the mentally ill and the pharmaceutical industry have garnered several national awards, including a George Polk Award for medical writing and a National Association of Science Writers Award for best magazine article. A series he cowrote for the *Boston Globe* on the abuse of mental patients in research settings was named a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in 1998.