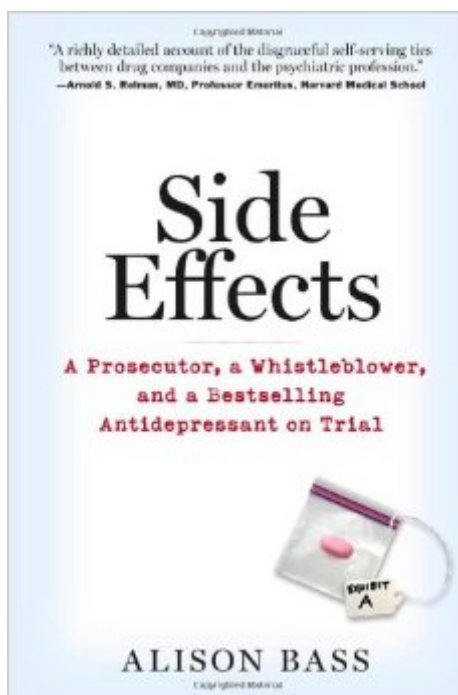


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# Side Effects: A Prosecutor, A Whistleblower, And A Bestselling Antidepressant On Trial



## Synopsis

As the mental health reporter for the Boston Globe, Alison Bass's front-page reporting on conflicts of interest in medical research stunned readers, and her series on sexual misconduct among psychiatrists earned a Pulitzer Prize nomination. Now she turns her investigative skills to a controversial case that exposed the increased suicide rates among adolescents taking antidepressants such as Paxil, Prozac, and Zoloft. *Side Effects* tells the tale of a gutsy assistant attorney general who, along with an unlikely whistle-blower at an Ivy League university, uncovered evidence of deception behind one of the most successful drug campaigns in history. Paxil was the world's bestselling antidepressant in 2002. Pediatric prescriptions soared, even though there was no proof that the drug performed any better than sugar pills in treating children and adolescents, and the real risks the drugs posed were withheld from the public. The New York State Attorney General's office brought an unprecedented lawsuit against giant manufacturer GlaxoSmithKline, the maker of Paxil, for consumer fraud. The successful suit launched a tidal wave of protest that changed the way drugs are tested, sold, and marketed in this country. With meticulous research, Alison Bass shows us the underbelly of the pharmaceutical industry. She lays bare the unhealthy ties between the medical establishment, big pharma, and the FDA's relationships that place vulnerable children and adults at risk every day.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

It's horrifying to read about our dependence on drugs. I was shocked with the first story: A teenager feels uncomfortable in social situations. She sees an ad on television promising a drug to turn teens

from wallflowers to social butterflies. She asks her doctor for the drug. No problem, he says. He's not a psychiatrist, but he is an MD. Aside from concerns about effects of these drugs on children and young people, why doesn't someone ask why doctors encourage patients to seek solutions in a bottle? How is depression diagnosed (or over-diagnosed)? Then we have a story of a psychiatrist at Brown University who appears to be billing the government for research he's not conducting. He's also adjusting research reports to discount side effects. He's still around, still holding a prestigious position at Brown University, still receiving research grants. Author Bass also quotes a disturbing statistic: doctors who accept money from pharmaceutical companies (for research, consulting or testifying) tend to prescribe a lot more medication than those who don't. The fiery, likeable prosecutor battles her own vision problems as well as the pharmaceutical industry. It's frustrating to read about the legal minutiae she has to address while people are dying from these drugs. The judge's name sounds familiar: I believe she was also the judge in the Martha Stewart case. At the end of the book, we learn that the troubled teen lost her pill-induced "suicidal ideation" after discontinuing Ambien and Paxil. She has learned to accept her personality and she's found the perfect job as a veterinary technician. That's the good news. But as Bass reports, FDA reports still depend on doctors who accept money from drug companies, but claim they remain unbiased. Maybe they could work on a drug to cure their deep denial.

Alison Bass brings all the players to life, both the good and the bad, in this well documented story behind the NY Attorney General's legal action against GSK. This book is in the tradition of Erin Brokovich or A Civil Action; it reads like a novel, like a thriller in fact, only it's true. No one could make this stuff up. I could not put it down. Bass deserves a lot of credit for her courage in writing this. Not only does she expose the underbelly of academic research at prestigious Ivy League schools, but also uncovers the sordid manipulation of patient advocacy groups like NAMI by pharmaceutical interests. Nothing is sacred. She goes after it all and it's a story that needs to be told in full just as it is here. I hope it will be widely read. It is a useful and exciting addition to the many books coming out about the corruption in the pharmaceutical industry, academic research, and the regulatory authorities, bringing it down to a very human level.

Side Effects reads like a novel, even though it is a factual, non-fiction book. It is a well-written, outstanding story that depicts how several pharmaceutical firms along with the FDA intentionally did not disclose the negative, suicidal side effects of anti-depressant drugs such as Paxil, Prozac and Zoloft. Alison Bass weaves this story through a few victims and researchers who were trying to get

out the truth and stand up against some very powerful, manipulative and well-financed pharmaceutical companies who make billions of dollars from these drugs. A must read!

Alison Bass's book *Side Effects* makes for a great read. Bullying, distortion of the truth, coercion, and patient deaths from side effects of drugs. The story of distortion of study results related to SSRI antidepressants, and the corruption of leaders in the academic psychiatry field for the purposes of promoting profit for pharma. I found it painful to read sometimes, being as the story was close to home, so to speak. Doug Bremner MD, author of: *The Goose That Laid The Golden Egg*

This account of shady goings on in the U.S. drug-industrial complex is an eye-opener. Even though the subject matter might seem a bit sterile -- clinical trials, the FDA, the pharmaceutical industry, and university researchers -- *Side Effects* is a delightful page-turner. The reader is drawn into the lives of the characters and the details of their compelling stories as if one were reading a novel or detective story. *Side Effects* is a must read in our pill-popping culture.

This is a fairly new book and very well written, I can only hope that this book gets into the hands of many interested parties and many more that should be aware of what is happening all around us. This book is based on facts of true stories and shows how the doctors, the pharmaceutical giants and the FDA have all been manipulating us for a very long time. Alison Bass has done an amazing job of bringing these stories together and putting it out there for millions to see. I have always been a big fan of former Attorney General Eliot Spitzer and this book shines a light on him showing some of the progress that he has made. He successfully cracked his way into many large corporations to expose the wrongful things they do. These corporations felt they were too big and too powerful to be held responsible for their actions. He cut them off at the knees and brought them down to size. He made sure these guys played by the rules and it's a shame he is no longer in charge. There are stories in this book that will send chills up your spine like a horror movie, only then to be snapped back to reality realizing these are true stories that really happened. This book has cemented the original reasons why I have been determined to find the truths about antidepressants and those that manufacture them and push them on the people that should not be on them in the first place. This book is an eye-opener for anyone who believes that, for the most part, your doctors, Big Pharma and the FDA are here to protect you. They will force pills on you that are not safe, because you don't know any better. Educate yourself and read this book!

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