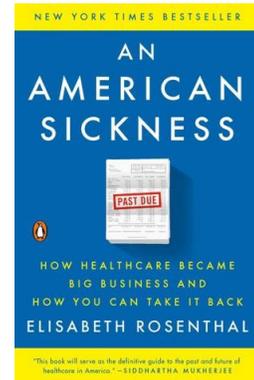


Discussion Guide

An American Sickness

By Elisabeth Rosenthal

1. Were you surprised to learn that although hospitals initially started as charitable community organizations and are today still legally classified as nonprofits, that they in fact are very profitable nonprofits and do very little to bring down costs? From Rosenthal's examples do you think hospitals have abandoned their original mission?
2. Rosenthal examines the advent of health insurance as a way to aid patients, primarily to compensate for income lost while workers were ill, but instead it has in some ways become the "original sin that catalyzed the evolution of today's medical industrial complex."
3. Were you surprised to learn that health insurance companies consistently pay for tests, treatments, and drugs at outrageous prices, therefore allowing prices to "rise to whatever the market will bear"?
4. Prior to reading this book did you feel that the health insurer was in your corner? Do you still feel that way?
5. Prior to reading *An American Sickness*, how would you have characterized the problems affecting the American health care system (ex. Inefficiency)? After reading this book do you still agree with your prior assessment or have you concluded that many of the players in the healthcare market (hospitals, doctors, pharmaceutical companies, etc.) are only in it for the money and padding their bottom-line?
6. Rosenthal weaves many moving tales of those who are paying dearly for their access to healthcare and have been fiscally and/or emotionally affected during the process. What story or stories did you find particularly moving? Did any of the tales reflect your experience with the health care system?
7. How did you feel as you read this book?
8. Do you consider yourself an informed healthcare consumer? Do you "shop around" for health care services and resources? Do you pay close attention to your insurance statement of benefits? Do you feel that *An American Sickness* has given you some tools to become a more informed healthcare consumer?
9. In an interview Rosenthal said when doing research for *An American Sickness*, "one thing that struck me is that physicians, nurses, and frontline clinicians often feel, as much as patients that they are helpless victims of the health care system. They don't like it and don't approve of it, but they also feel like they do not have power to do anything about it." What are your thoughts about this? If you have worked or currently work in the healthcare field do you agree with her assessment?



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10. Rosenthal has stated that “one of the reasons that I wrote my book was for patients and physicians to realize that they do have power, that they should be rising up. I’m hopeful that a ‘we the patients’ movement will arise, to state that we’re not going to take this anymore. I also hope that we’ll see health care voters rise up, saying that we don’t like this stressful, complicated, patient-unfriendly system.” Do you feel as a patient/consumer/voter that you have the power to initiate change to our dysfunctional healthcare system?
11. Do you feel that consumers should share in the part of the blame for why the healthcare marketplace is so broken? Or do you feel that most people feel that they are at the mercy of the medical-industrial complex and have very little ability to make it better?
12. Were there any areas where you felt that Rosenthal fell short?
13. What three words would you use to describe this book? Is this a book you would recommend to others to read, and if so, why?

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