ForeWord Reviews

HEALTH & FITNESS

Mediscams
Chuck Whitlock
Renaissance Media
978-1-58063-180-8
(Feb 15, 2001)

From the introduction in his work on fraud and fakery in the health care profession, Whitlock makes it clear that he has a very particular ax to grind. He put the book together to urge consumers to actively participate in their own health care, and to do so by acting with a sense of skepticism when traditonal medical wisdom seems a bit off-kilter. With that said, the lively Whitlock launches into an exploration of historical medical fakery and contemporary scams. As an award-winning investigative reporter for TV newsmagazines Extra, Hard Copy and Inside Edition, he is adept not only at digging down to the real story, but also at simply telling really good ones. In one cautionary tale, Whitlock details the story of a "doctor" who had lost his license, but continued doing surgery, often botching male-to-female operations for transsexuals that resulted in horrible physical and psychological damage.

Although he attacks such posers with gusto, Whitlock saves much of his vitriol for what he considers the worst scam in medicine: managed care. After describing how his elderly mother was shuffled around by her HMO, making her last days full of confusion and sadness, the author goes on an unrelenting attack and finishes with some tips for a managed care program. His questions about the practices of HMO will be familiar for many who have dealt with their plan's paperwork: "How can we protect ourselves against having our health sacrificed in the name of corporate profits? How do we go about sizing up that lumbering, faceless managed care company that's based in some obscure suburb that many of its subscribers have never heard of?"

Like many investigative reporters, Whitlock isn't afraid to ask the hard questions. The answers he uncovers will benefit anyone who is interested in protecting themselves and their family from shady practitioners.

Elizabeth Millard