

The Triumph of Doubt: Dark Money and the Science of Deception

David Michaels

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David Michaels's extensive career, including his time as an Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA, puts him in the perfect position to write *The Triumph of Doubt*, about the wide variety of scientific "product defense" work that's done and underwritten by industry giants out of the sight of the average consumer.

When companies can "invest" in scientific studies, Michaels shows, there's an increased risk of flawed studies whose intent is to obfuscate. A chemical manufacturer can make it seem "inconclusive" that a particular chemical causes cancer in order to resist extra regulations, for example. A given industry might seize on a scientific notion seen to help make their case; they could then hire scientists, create conflicts of interest, and bolster their biased findings through publications in reputable journals.

The book shows how public relations and marketing teams use such studies to bury the contradictory findings of independent scientists. This trend is evinced through a variety of case studies from industries including industrial chemicals, opioid pharmaceuticals, alcohol, and tobacco. Later chapters cover substances that many wouldn't see as dangerous, from sugar to talc. Michaels identifies a "playbook" of moves that helps to keep dangerous products on the market.

Showing that this "science for sale" model has undermined trust in scientific research, even making way for skepticism around evolution and climate change, the book lists concrete ways to change the trend, from disclosing all funding sources to having independent scientists evaluate all results. It is dense with scientific research but intelligible, with concrete examples of incomplete and warped scientific studies that are major damage.

Driven by scientific interest, *The Triumph of Doubt* is a measured but passionate argument for protecting the public from harmful substances via federal oversight.

LAURA LEAVITT (January / February 2020)

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