



Suckers: How Alternative Medicine Makes Fools of Us All

Rose Shapiro

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'Alternative' medicine is now used by one in three of us. In the UK we spend an estimated £4.5 billion a year on it and its practitioners are now insinuating themselves into the mainstream. There are methods based on ancient or far-eastern medicine, as well as ones invented in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Many are promoted as natural treatments. What they have in common is that there is no hard evidence that any of them work.

Treatments like homeopathy, acupuncture and chiropractic are widely available and considered reputable by many. Ever more bizarre therapies, from naturopathy to nutraceuticals, ear candling to ergogenics, are increasingly favoured. Endorsed by celebrities and embraced by the middle classes, alternative medicine's appeal is based on the spurious rediscovery of ancient wisdom and the supposedly benign quality of nature. Surrounded by an aura of unquestioning respect and promoted through uncritical airtime and column inches, alternative medicine has become a lifestyle choice. Its global market is predicted to be worth \$5 trillion by 2050.

Suckers reveals how alternative medicine can jeopardise the health of those it claims to treat, leaches resources from treatments of proven efficacy and is largely unaccountable and unregulated. In short, it is an industry that preys on human vulnerability and makes fools of us all.

Suckers is a calling to account of a social and intellectual fraud; a bracing, funny and popular take on a global delusion.

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