

Reviews and Online Discourse Surrounding "Follow the Science: How Big Pharma Misleads, Obscures, and Prevails"

Sharyl Attkisson's "Follow the Science: How Big Pharma Misleads, Obscures, and Prevails," published in September 2024, has generated significant online discourse characterized by polarized reception and extensive coverage across multiple platforms. The book, which presents a critical examination of pharmaceutical industry practices and government health policies, has attracted both fervent supporters who praise its investigative rigor and sharp critics who question its methodology and conclusions. Reader reviews on platforms like Goodreads reveal a stark divide, with some reviewers abandoning the book due to concerns about its content trajectory, while others commend it as essential reading for understanding healthcare system corruption^[1] ^[2]. Professional media coverage has been notably sparse from mainstream outlets, though the book has found substantial traction in alternative media spaces and among readers already skeptical of pharmaceutical industry practices^[3] ^[4].

Critical Reception and Reader Reviews

Goodreads Community Response

The reception on Goodreads demonstrates the contentious nature of Attkisson's work, with reviews spanning the full spectrum of opinions. One particularly detailed review from Chris Boutté reveals the complex dynamics surrounding reader expectations and the book's content evolution^[1]. Boutté, who identifies as a recovering pill addict with inherent skepticism toward pharmaceutical companies, initially found the book's opening chapters rational and informative. However, he ultimately abandoned the work after encountering what he characterized as "anti-trans rhetoric" and claims about LGBTQ organizations wielding excessive governmental influence^[1]. This review illustrates how the book's scope extends beyond pharmaceutical criticism into broader cultural and political territories that some readers find problematic.

Conversely, other Goodreads reviewers have expressed strong appreciation for Attkisson's investigative approach. Lori L., a prolific reviewer, characterized the book as "very highly recommended" and praised its meticulous research and clear presentation^[2]. She noted that the work was "well written, meticulously researched, clearly presented, and infinitely compelling and interesting," emphasizing that she immediately began sharing information from the book with family members while still reading^[2]. This reviewer's response exemplifies the book's ability to resonate deeply with readers who share Attkisson's skepticism of pharmaceutical industry practices and government health policies.

Detailed Content Analysis from Readers

Multiple reviewers have provided substantive analysis of the book's specific claims and evidence. Sarah Cupitt noted the book's focus on the troubling correlation between medical advances and increasing chronic illness rates, highlighting Attkisson's argument that pharmaceutical companies now control "the media, the medical schools, the 'independent' medical journals and much of Congress" ^[2]. This observation reflects a central theme in reader discussions about the book's portrayal of systemic corruption and institutional capture.

Mike Cheng's review provides a structural analysis of the book, describing it as divided into two distinct halves: the first focusing on prescription drug and vaccine harms with subsequent cover-ups, and the second examining COVID-19 response policies ^[2]. Cheng's assessment suggests that the book positions the COVID-19 pandemic as potentially catalyzing broader public skepticism of established health narratives, creating what he terms a "possible redpill event" that might unite diverse political constituencies in questioning official health recommendations ^[2].

Professional and Media Coverage

Alternative Media Engagement

The book has received notable coverage in alternative media spaces, particularly those focused on health freedom and medical skepticism. Dr. Ronald Hoffman's comprehensive review on his website provides a professional medical perspective, noting that Attkisson's investigative reporting on vaccine safety has previously earned her criticism and characterizing her as someone "some consider a pariah" ^[4]. Hoffman's review contextualizes the book within broader trends of declining public trust in scientific institutions, citing Pew Research Center data showing decreased confidence in science's positive societal impact ^[4].

CBS Austin featured Attkisson in a television segment promoting the book, framing her work as exposing "medical establishment profiteering" ^[3]. The segment positioned her critique within the context of declining American health outcomes despite increased healthcare spending, suggesting that collaboration between medical establishments and various industry stakeholders prioritizes profit over public health ^[3]. This coverage represents one of the few instances of mainstream media engagement with the book's content.

Digital Platform Presence

The book maintains a significant presence across digital platforms, with promotional content appearing on YouTube and various audiobook services ^[5] ^[6] ^[7]. A 16-minute summary video on YouTube provides condensed coverage of the book's major themes, focusing particularly on bioterrorism preparedness issues following 9/11 and subsequent vaccine safety concerns ^[7]. This digital presence suggests the book has found an audience particularly engaged with online alternative health content and skeptical perspectives on pharmaceutical industry practices.

Blinkist, a service providing condensed book summaries, featured "Follow the Science" with content focusing on post-9/11 bioterrorism preparedness and vaccine safety concerns ^[8]. The summary emphasizes Attkisson's examination of smallpox vaccination programs and their

associated risks, highlighting cases where adverse effects may have been underreported or overlooked^[8]. This platform's inclusion suggests the book's themes resonate with readers seeking quick access to contrarian perspectives on health policy.

Content Themes and Controversies

Vaccine Safety and Informed Consent

Reader reviews consistently highlight the book's extensive coverage of vaccine safety issues and informed consent ethics. Multiple reviewers note Attkisson's discussion of the "Baby Oxygen study" and subsequent infant deaths, as well as her analysis of Alzheimer's drug approval processes^[2]. These examples serve as case studies for broader arguments about pharmaceutical industry influence over regulatory processes and research outcomes.

The book's handling of COVID-19 vaccine issues appears particularly significant to readers, with several reviews mentioning Attkisson's coverage of "Long Covid and Long Vax" as emerging conditions potentially linked to spike protein responses^[2]. This content addresses ongoing debates about vaccine safety and long-term effects that remain contentious within medical and public health communities.

Media and Industry Collusion

Reviewers frequently cite the book's examination of financial relationships between pharmaceutical companies and various stakeholders. The work reportedly provides "shocking examples" of media collaboration with pharmaceutical advertisers, educational institution influence, and regulatory capture^{[9] [10]}. These themes resonate with readers already suspicious of institutional relationships and information gatekeeping in health-related matters.

Ktmholm's review specifically praises Attkisson's documentation of "ghostwritten" studies and financial kickbacks to healthcare providers, while noting media complicity due to advertising revenue dependencies^[2]. This analysis reflects broader concerns about conflicts of interest in medical research and publication that extend beyond pharmaceutical industry practices to encompass entire information ecosystems.

Commercial Performance and Distribution

Publishing and Sales Metrics

The book achieved commercial success through HarperCollins Publishers, with wide distribution across major retail platforms including Barnes & Noble, Amazon's Audible service, and various independent bookstores^{[11] [10] [12]}. The audiobook version, narrated by Attkisson herself, spans over 12 hours and has been made available through multiple digital platforms^{[6] [13]}. This extensive distribution suggests publisher confidence in the book's commercial viability despite its controversial subject matter.

Multiple retailers highlight the book's credentials through Attkisson's Emmy Awards and previous New York Times bestseller status, positioning it within established investigative journalism traditions rather than fringe health literature^{[14] [9] [15]}. This marketing approach appears

designed to lend credibility to controversial claims by emphasizing the author's mainstream journalism background.

Reader Engagement Metrics

Goodreads data indicates substantial reader engagement, with multiple detailed reviews and ongoing discussion threads^{[1] [2]}. The platform's review diversity suggests the book successfully reached audiences across different ideological spectrums, though reception remains polarized based on readers' prior perspectives on pharmaceutical industry practices and vaccine safety.

The book's presence on services like Blinkist and various YouTube summary channels indicates demand for condensed versions of its content, suggesting broader interest in its themes even among readers unwilling to engage with the full text^{[7] [8]}. This pattern reflects contemporary information consumption habits where controversial health content often circulates through summary formats and social media discussion rather than complete reading.

Conclusion

"Follow the Science" has established itself as a significant entry in contemporary debates about pharmaceutical industry practices, vaccine safety, and institutional trust in healthcare. The book's reception demonstrates the deeply polarized nature of these discussions, with readers' responses largely predetermined by their existing perspectives on medical authority and industry influence. While mainstream media coverage has been limited, the work has found substantial traction in alternative media spaces and among readers already skeptical of established health narratives.

The extensive online presence across multiple platforms, from traditional book retailers to audiobook services and video summaries, indicates successful commercial distribution despite controversial content. Reader reviews reveal appreciation for Attkisson's investigative credentials and detailed documentation, though critics raise concerns about the book's scope expansion beyond pharmaceutical issues into broader cultural and political territories. The work's ultimate significance may lie not in resolving debates about pharmaceutical industry practices, but in crystallizing existing tensions between institutional authority and public skepticism in contemporary American healthcare discourse.

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4. <https://drhoffman.com/article/book-review-follow-the-science-how-big-pharma-misleads-obscures-and-prevails-by-sharyl-attkisson/>
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