

# Reviews and Online Mentions of "Rethinking Medications: Truth, Power, and the Drugs You Take"

Jerry Avorn's latest book "Rethinking Medications: Truth, Power, and the Drugs You Take," published in April 2025, has garnered significant attention across multiple platforms and media outlets. The book, which examines critical issues in America's pharmaceutical system, has received coverage ranging from professional reviews to podcast discussions and retail listings, demonstrating its relevance to current healthcare debates.

## Professional Reviews and Critical Assessment

### Kirkus Reviews Recognition

Kirkus Reviews provided one of the most prominent professional assessments of Avorn's work, describing it as "a masterful assessment of a highly flawed health care system" <sup>[1]</sup>. The review highlighted the book's central thesis about how pharmaceutical companies were required to prove drug efficacy only beginning in 1962, despite initial resistance <sup>[1]</sup>. The review particularly emphasized Avorn's analysis of the FDA's Accelerated Approval program, which was created in response to AIDS activists in the 1980s but has since led to concerning practices where drugs are approved based on "surrogate" clinical endpoints without proven patient benefits <sup>[1]</sup>.

The Kirkus review noted Avorn's documentation of how drug companies often avoid conducting follow-up research once their products are approved, since "a drug proven effective does not increase profits because it's already approved, and failure is disaster" <sup>[1]</sup>. This assessment underscored one of the book's key arguments about how most drugs approved today haven't been demonstrated to benefit patients, with many expensive treatments considered useless by experts <sup>[1]</sup>.

### Reader Reception on Goodreads

The book's reception among general readers presents a more mixed picture. On Goodreads, one reviewer noted that while the book "started out as a 5-star read," it "lost its way" about halfway through when it shifted from focusing on pharmaceutical industry issues to becoming more autobiographical <sup>[2]</sup>. The reviewer criticized how "the author's political views took over, and factual objectivity went out the window in favor of weasel words such as 'likely,' 'anticipated,' 'expected'" <sup>[2]</sup>. This critique suggests some readers found the latter portions of the book less analytically rigorous than the initial chapters.

## **Media Coverage and Interviews**

### **Podcast and Radio Appearances**

Avorn has made several notable media appearances to discuss his book. The Aging Well Podcast featured an extensive interview where Dr. Jeff Armstrong discussed Avorn's journey into medicine and the book's central themes about medication evaluation and prescription practices<sup>[3]</sup>. The conversation covered the pharmaceutical industry's influence, drug safety complexities, and high U.S. drug prices, while also touching on FDA approval processes and the role of politics in drug policy<sup>[3]</sup>.

Radio New Zealand conducted a feature interview highlighting how "breakthrough drugs are changing medicine, offering new hope in pill form," while emphasizing Avorn's argument that "the system meant to protect patients is under strain"<sup>[4]</sup>. The interview focused on how industry pressure has "quietly weakened FDA standards, allowing risky or barely effective drugs to slip through"<sup>[4]</sup>.

### **Texas Standard Coverage**

Texas Standard featured Avorn in the context of changing federal health oversight, noting how his book arrives "at a time of great change when it comes to how the federal government regulates and informs consumers about medicine"<sup>[5]</sup>. The interview emphasized the importance of communication between patients and doctors as "the key to effective use of medications" during periods of regulatory uncertainty<sup>[5]</sup>.

### **Podcast Analysis on Keen On**

The Keen On podcast provided a substantive analysis of the book's themes, identifying five key takeaways that encapsulate Avorn's arguments<sup>[6]</sup>. These include the observation that Americans pay approximately twice as much for prescription drugs as citizens of other wealthy countries, the pharmaceutical industry's use of "patent thickets" to extend monopolies, and the limited progress in mental health medications compared to other medical fields<sup>[6]</sup>.

## **Publishing and Distribution Coverage**

### **Publisher Promotional Materials**

Simon & Schuster's official description emphasizes how America's drug evaluation process, "once the envy of the world, is being seriously compromised"<sup>[7]</sup>. The publisher highlights Avorn's credentials as a Harvard Medical School professor and his position "at the very center of many of these controversies" as lending authority to his analysis<sup>[7]</sup>. The promotional materials stress the book's practical approach, noting how Avorn "offers practical steps that consumers, policymakers, and practitioners can take to address these problems"<sup>[7]</sup>.

## **Audiobook Reception**

The audiobook version, narrated by Avorn himself, has received attention on Audible with a runtime of 16 hours and 24 minutes<sup>[8]</sup>. One reviewer noted "great material, inconsistent vocal performance by author," suggesting that while the content is valuable, Avorn's delivery as narrator may not match professional standards<sup>[8]</sup>.

## **Bookstore and Retail Presence**

Multiple independent bookstores have featured the book prominently, with Gibson's Bookstore and Porchlight Books both providing detailed descriptions and endorsements<sup>[9]</sup> <sup>[10]</sup>. Porchlight Books has gone further by publishing an excerpt from the book, demonstrating their confidence in its appeal to readers<sup>[11]</sup>.

## **Industry and Academic Endorsements**

The book has garnered impressive endorsements from notable figures in healthcare and business. Mark Cuban, entrepreneur and drug cost innovator, praised the work, stating that "Rethinking Medications gives us the historical and recent lessons we need to move forward with smarter solutions for the U.S. healthcare industry" <sup>[12]</sup>. Eric Topol, Executive Vice President of Scripps Research Institute, characterized Avorn as "a leading academic force in assessing safety and efficacy of prescription drugs" and described the book as providing "a systematic and up-to-date interrogation that will be useful for patients" <sup>[12]</sup>.

Publishers Weekly provided a review describing the book as "a troubling report" and "a damning survey of the drug development system's many failures" while noting that it "enlightens even as it infuriates" <sup>[12]</sup>. This assessment captures the dual nature of the book as both informative and provocative in its critique of current pharmaceutical practices.

## **Digital and Online Presence**

The book maintains a strong digital presence across multiple platforms, from Apple Books to various independent bookstore websites<sup>[13]</sup> <sup>[14]</sup> <sup>[15]</sup> <sup>[12]</sup>. This widespread availability suggests significant publisher confidence in the book's market appeal and reflects the timely nature of its subject matter in current healthcare discussions.

## **Conclusion**

The reviews and online mentions of "Rethinking Medications" reveal a work that has successfully engaged both professional critics and general readers, though with varying degrees of enthusiasm. While professional reviews and industry endorsements have been largely positive, emphasizing Avorn's expertise and the book's timely relevance, some reader feedback suggests concerns about the book's balance between objective analysis and personal perspective. The extensive media coverage, from podcasts to radio interviews, demonstrates the book's success in generating public discourse about pharmaceutical industry practices and drug policy reform. Overall, the reception indicates that Avorn has succeeded in bringing important healthcare policy issues to public attention, even if some readers find aspects of his presentation less compelling than others.



1. <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/jerry-avorn/rethinking-medications/>
2. <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/214152348-rethinking-medications>
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