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Poison Pills: The Untold Story of the Vioxx Drug Scandal

Tom Nesi

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To the millions of Americans who suffer from chronic pain and arthritis, Vioxx seemed like a miracle. One of the most widely promoted and prescribed pain medications in the world -- used by more than twenty million people -- it was endorsed by the medical establishment and celebrities such as Olympic champion figure skater Dorothy Hamill. With annual sales of $2.5 billion, Vioxx became a pharmaceutical bonanza before being abruptly taken off the market in September 2004, after it was revealed that it led to an increased risk of heart-related disease and death.

Drawing on internal documents, video footage, court testimony, and exclusive interviews, as well as three decades of experience inside the medical industry, Tom Nesi tells the dramatic story of what the drug's manufacturer, Merck, knew and when. It is a compelling narrative of business and medical science run amok, with a cast of characters ranging from those at the highest levels of the multibillion-dollar pharmaceutical industry to research scientists, marketers, and drug company sales reps. Here also are accounts from physicians, lawyers, financial analysts, and patients and their families whose lives have been forever altered by Vioxx.

Set against a fascinating history of the origins of the modern pharmaceutical industry, POISON PILLS is a shocking tale that involves the breakdown of the United States medical system, the failures of the Food and Drug Administration, and enormous profits made by a large pharmaceutical corporation at the potential cost of thousands of lives.

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