

Physicians' conflicts of interest are rampant in the American medical community. Today it is not uncommon for doctors to refer patients to clinics or labs in which they have a financial interest; for hospitals to offer incentives to physicians who refer patients to them; or for drug companies to provide lucrative give-aways to entice doctors to use their "brand name" drugs.

In *Medicine, Money and Morals*, Marc A. Rodwin examines these conflicts of interest, explains why the profession has failed to cope successfully with them, and shows how they have become worse over the past century. He looks at how—in response to dubious practices of the past such as fee-splitting, physicians' ownership of medical facilities, drug dispensing, and the like—the profession developed ethical guidelines but was unable to enforce them. He shows how current public policies and institutional practices now offer doctors financial incentives to promote various goals at odds with the interest of patients. These policies and practices, Rodwin writes, tie doctors' personal financial well-being to medical care providers—hospitals, medical suppliers, and pharmaceutical firms—and also to insurers and other third party payers. Doctors today are tempted to think of how they will fare financially by making particular clinical decisions.

As a result, patients often receive too many or too few medical services, or the wrong kind, sometimes undergoing painful, dangerous, or unnecessary medical procedures.

Rodwin shows what can be learned from the way society has coped with conflicts of interest involving other professionals (lawyers, government officials and financial professionals), all of whom are held to higher standards of accountability than doctors. He explains, too, why simplistic solutions such as public disclosure of conflicts or government ownership of health services won't work. He offers examples of what can be done to help reduce these problems by regulation, tax policy, auditing, and peer review. He recommends that we prevent doctors from entering situations which give rise to conflicts of interest by subjecting them to oversight and by imposing sanctions for breach of trust.

Our failure to face physicians' conflicts of interest has distorted the way medicine is practiced, compromised the loyalty of doctors to patients, and harmed patients, society, and the integrity of the medical profession. For those concerned with the quality of their health care, the problems of our health care system, or medical ethics, *Medicine, Money and Morals* is a provocative look into the current health care crisis and a powerful prescription for change.

MEDICINE MONEY & MORALS



Physicians'
Conflicts
of Interest

MARC A. RODWIN

"Any American concerned about skyrocketing health care costs will want to read this book. Understanding that some physicians earn disgraceful profits through self-referrals, and learning how to stop them, is one important key to getting health costs under control."

—Congressman Pete Stark
Chairman of the House Ways and
Means Subcommittee on Health

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Marc A. Rodwin, Associate Professor of Law and Public Policy, School of Public and Environmental Affairs, at Indiana University-Bloomington, has an M.A. from Oxford University, a J.D. from the University of Virginia Law School, and a Ph.D. from Brandeis University.

“Carefully documents how medicine has become commercialized, and how medical ethics are being replaced by business ethics.... In this timely book Rodwin properly challenges us to confront financial conflicts of interest that harm patients, physicians, and society alike.”

—George J. Annas, Director,
Law, Medicine & Ethics Program,
Boston University School of Public Health

“Tells a troubling and gripping story in a carefully researched, analytically rigorous, but highly readable manner. Rodwin places present conflicts of interest in an historical context and helps us think about how to create a better future.”

—Rashi Fein, Harvard Medical School

“Well documented, closely argued....

While Clinton administration planning for a thorough revision of health care gives Rodwin’s effort added relevance, readers who have been, are, or will be patients should at least become acquainted with *Medicine, Money and Morals*. Those closely involved in any aspect of its subject should study it thoroughly.”

—Booklist

“This [book] is a unique contribution to our understanding of a problem that is at the heart of our health care system’s ills,

but which has received inadequate public attention to date.... In the long run, no solution to the problems of the health care system will be effective unless it deals with the issues so thoughtfully and comprehensively analyzed by the author.”

—from the foreword by Arnold S. Relman, MD
Editor-in-Chief, Emeritus,
The New England Journal of Medicine

“Rodwin’s excellent book...is probably the first systematic examination of financial conflicts of interest in the medical profession....

If health care reform is to achieve the worthy goals of better ensuring the practice of cost-effective medicine and increasing public confidence in the health care system, it will have to come to terms with the persistent and ingrained conflicts of interest so splendidly articulated by Professor Rodwin.”

—Lawrence O. Gostin, J.D.,
The New England Journal of Medicine

“Anyone seriously evaluating the various schemes being suggested for reforming American health care policy today must read this book.

It shows how many of the present policies have created serious conflicts of interest for doctors to the detriment of both their patients’ well-being and the cost of care. Rodwin’s recommendations for reform are both sound and imaginative.”

—Eliot Freidson, author of *Medical Work in America*

“Marc Rodwin’s book is just what the important debate about physicians’ conflicts of interest needs—

a subtle and systematic analysis of the many forms these conflicts take, the alternative policy responses that might eliminate or limit the conflicts, and the ethical and professional values at stake in these policy choices. Rodwin’s comprehensive view will be indispensable for the daunting task he sets us of ‘designing new policies and institutions that hold physicians accountable to patients.’ I expect this will be the best book on the subject for many years to come.”

—Dan W. Brock, Director, Center for Biomedical Ethics
Brown University

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—*Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*

About the Author:

Marc A. Rodwin is Associate Professor of Law and Public Policy at The School of Public and Environmental Affairs, Indiana University.