

## BOOK REVIEW

*The Zyprexa Papers*. Jim Gottstein, Anchorage, AK: Jim Gottstein. 2020. 234 pp., \$17.50 (paperback); \$9.99 (Kindle)

To me, *The Zyprexa Papers* reads like a combination between a Stephen King horror tale and a John Grisham legal thriller. I have met the author Jim Gottstein once, and I remember him as an unassuming low-key individual not prone to self-promotion. After reading this book, I now realize what a heroic figure he actually is. Not because he touts himself as heroic but because what he accomplished is nothing short of heroic. Against all odds, and unlimited financial opposition, he exposed the deception of one of our “great” pharmaceutical giants, and probably saved many thousands of lives in the process. And it is not just his exploits, but the efforts of many self-described psychiatric survivors that are detailed in the book. These are people who, in many cases, have been subjected to many years of electroshock or forced medications and have risen above their experiences to advocate and protect the most vulnerable among us.

The truth is we all need protection from the deliberate harm perpetrated by a company like Eli Lilly, through their deceptive marketing of the drug Zyprexa, to which we may become exposed from cradle to grave. It is clear why Lilly would want to conceal the substantial increased risk of diabetes, massive weight gain, and other metabolic problems caused by this drug, “side effects” that may shorten someone’s life by decades. It is equally clear that consumers have a right to know this information before making a decision about whether or not to take this drug.

I have met other heroic figures in the fight against the deceptive harmful promotion of pharmaceutical products. They include people like Dr. David Healy, Dr. Peter Breggin, and Dr. Grace Jackson. All of these individuals, with different strengths and flaws, share an uncommon courage, a willingness to risk everything, in the face of fierce deadly opposition. I have to add Jim Gottstein to the list. And it’s not because Gottstein only shares his triumphs. He is more than willing to share his painful defeats and his sleep-deprived mistakes. But it is his humility, humanity and perseverance that I appreciate most of all.

The book goes into great detail as to the legal hurdles Gottstein faced and offers transcripts of gripping courtroom testimony regarding his efforts to shine a light on Lilly’s corruption. He also details his efforts to represent and protect a man forced against his will to take pharmaceutical products of limited benefit but well-documented harm, a man who had been involuntarily committed more than 80 times over the course of decades. The scrupulous detail may not appeal to everyone. But I have to say it definitely appeals to me. I want to know EXACTLY what happened and how it unfolded. Gottstein offers a nuanced account in a daily diary format. His book is a roadmap for how to take on a powerful corporate giant to expose wrongdoing. You don’t have to be an activist to appreciate this book.

But you do have to be someone who cares about your fellow humans who might be harmed at the altar of corporate greed. If you fall into that category, then you'll want to read this book.

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