



Experimenting with the Consumer: The Mass Testing of Risky Products on the American Public

Marshall S. Shapo

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Experimenting With The Consumer exposes the hazards of the mass-market experimentation in which every American consumer and worker is unwittingly tapped for product risk data by manufacturers, scientists, and regulators. Vioxx, Heparin, Avandia, Paxil, fen-phen, estrogens, silicone implants, pacemakers, formaldehyde in FEMA trailers, 60 buckyballs in coatings ... the headlines are increasingly filled with hidden risks coming to light in popular products years after federal agencies approve them for the American public. Shapo shows readers how to get past unreasonable trust or fear and make the best risk-management choices for themselves and their families. He walks them through what questions to ask before consenting to be in a clinical trial; how to evaluate the implied bold-print claims against the small-print disclosures in advertisements for medical products; how to uncover product and environmental risks in their homes, workplaces, supermarkets, and neighborhoods; how to assess and control product risk while maximizing consumer choice and benefit; how to pressure government to tighten consumer protection; and how to seek legal redress.

Through a diverse selection of dramatic case studies, Shapo lays bare the incentives of companies and entrepreneurial scientists to fake or obscure experimental data before and after government approval; the fights between interested and disinterested scientists over data; the fights between scientists and doctors over patient rights; the campaigns of activists against government agencies to release experimental drugs; the impact of the journalistic and promotional media on public knowledge and perception of product risk; and the marketing tricks that manufacturers use to harness sexual desire to product launches and to shape the prescription choices of physicians.

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