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Sommario/riassunto

This book addresses the over-prescribing of antidepressants in people with mostly mild and subthreshold depression. It outlines the steep increase in antidepressant prescription and critically examines the current scientific evidence on the efficacy and safety of antidepressants in depression. The book is not only concerned with the conflicting views as to whether antidepressants are useful or ineffective in various forms of depression, but also aims at detailing how flaws in the conduct and reporting of antidepressant trials have led to an overestimation of benefits and underestimation of harms. The transformation of the diagnostic concept of depression from a rare but serious disorder to an over-inclusive, highly prevalent but predominantly mild and self-limiting disorder is central to the books argument. It maintains that biological reductionism in psychiatry and pharmaceutical marketing reframed depression as a brain disorder, corroborating the overemphasis on drug treatment in both research and practice. Finally, the author goes on to explore how pharmaceutical companies have distorted the scientific literature on the efficacy and safety of antidepressants and how patient advocacy groups, leading academics, and medical organisations with pervasive financial ties to the industry helped to promote systematically biased benefit-harm evaluations, affecting public attitudes towards antidepressants as well as medical education, training, and practice. Michael P. Hengartner is a senior researcher and lecturer at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland. He has published over 130 peer-reviewed journal articles and four book chapters. He was an expert evaluator for the European Research Council and the World Health Organization and currently is a member of the Swiss School of Public Health, the German Society for Social Psychiatry,and the European Public Health Association.