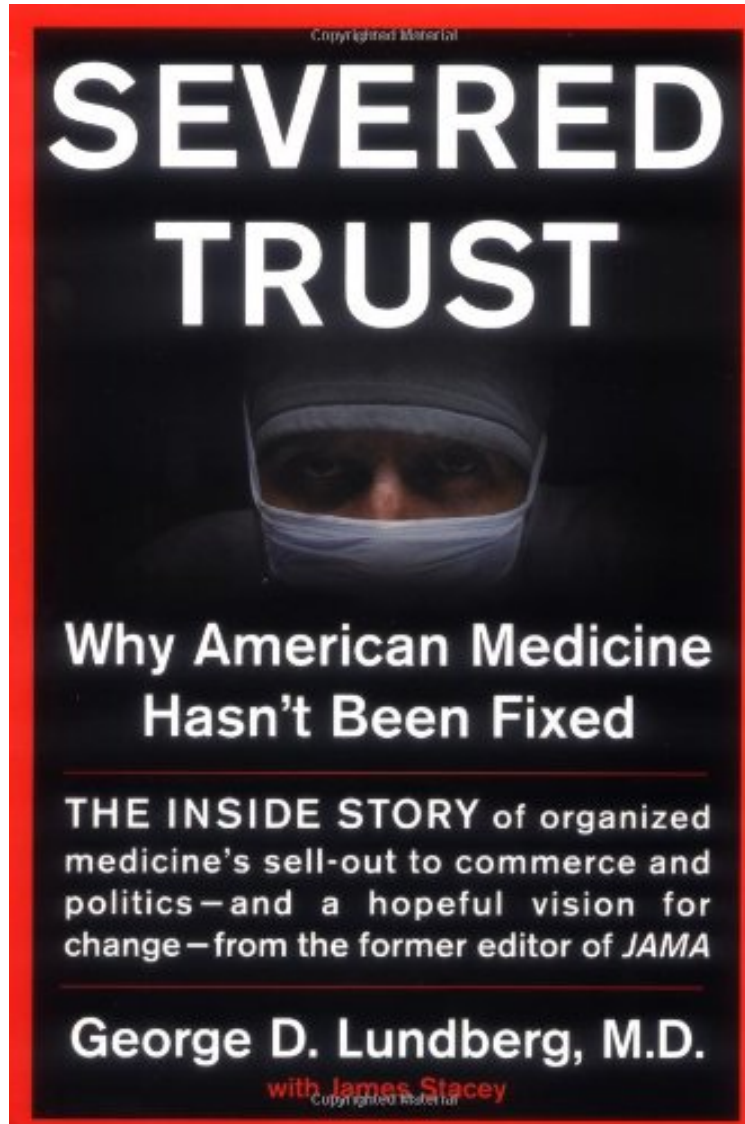


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Severed Trust: Why American Medicine Hasn't Been Fixed

George D. Lundberg

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George D. Lundberg : Severed Trust: Why American Medicine Hasn't Been Fixed before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Severed Trust: Why American Medicine Hasn't Been Fixed:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good review of healthcare history, how we got hereBy Biscotti2010While this book's solutions may seem dated following passage of the Affordable Care Act, how we got to this point is well written. It should be required reading for anyone considering leadership in healthcare, and anyone who works in the managed care. It gives necessary background to understand health policy. Lundberg did well

presenting a complex situation in a politically open manner. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Medical Memoir By J.L. Populist SEVERED TRUST is a critique of the U.S. medical systems. The author laments the changes in the physician-patient relationship where it went from a more personal relationship with trust and decision-making to a commercial relationship. He levels blame on many parts of the health care system and rightfully so. Some of the usual suspects are present- the insurance companies, pharmaceuticals, the government. We as patients and our physicians bear some of the responsibility as well. I thought his assessment of health insurance companies on page 47 was accurate- "The health insurance industry represents another unnecessary administrative cost. All it does is collect money, keep as much as it can, and dole out as little as possible." One of the provocative issues addressed in the book is the "heroic measures" that oppose a patient's intentions in a living will. Another area I found thought-provoking was the low number of autopsies performed after a patient dies in a hospital. He made a very good point why some hospitals and doctors don't want autopsies performed on their patients. Overall a good book about a prominent, current, political issue. As another reviewer pointed out, Dr. Lundberg does have a habit of repeating himself and it can be annoying. SEVERED TRUST is still a book worth reading about health care. 16 of 16 people found the following review helpful. A Well-Written, Informative, Provocative Book By Peter Frishauf American medicine is a classic paradox, offering the best of the best alongside an embarrassing failure to provide decent care for millions. If you have ever puzzled over how this situation came to be, Severed Trust provides an easy-to-understand, well-written explanation. This book is partly the autobiographical odyssey of America's most famous medical editor, George Lundberg, partly a social and political history of American medicine, and partly Dr. Lundberg's vision of the future, detailing what he believes must be done to put our house in order. There are rich and interesting stories alongside important historical information and discussions of social policy issues that in so many other books are.....well, just boring. The son of economically impoverished Alabama schoolteachers, Dr. Lundberg was inspired to enter medicine by his family doctor. He took his first job in medicine mopping floors at a local hospital. After medical school and a distinguished career in pathology; his greatest medical contributions started, first in the 1980s as editor of JAMA, the Journal of the American Medical Association, and, since 1999, as editor in chief of Medscape In this book, and at JAMA and Medscape, Lundberg relentlessly challenges us to think about issues that hurt the quality, availability, and compassion of care: Why is high-tech medicine, especially at the end of life, often foisted upon patients at great expense, and at times, in nonsensical and inhumane ways? Why are autopsy rates so low in the United States when it has been conclusively proven that autopsies are critical to high quality standards? Can we provide good preventive care for all Americans and if so, why don't we? Woven through the hard data presented in the book are Lundberg's personal anecdotes from experiences with family, friends, colleagues and articles he has introduced into public discussion and debate. Lundberg passionately believes that information is powerful medicine, and that by publishing scientifically-sound evidence society will take note, and people, professionals, markets, and politicians will join together to root out bad practices and make the world a better place. The realist in him knows it often doesn't work out that way. But sometimes it does, and the victories, failures, and recommendations are reported in the book with memorable, edgy style (bemoaning the state of autopsies, Lundberg declares "it is time for good pathologists to come out of their clinical labs and spend more time in the morgue.") Whether you agree or disagree with Lundberg's analyses or proposed fixes, I learned a lot about medicine, health care - and, George Lundberg - from this book, and enjoyed reading it. Peter Frishauf Founder, [Medscape] Senior Adviser, Medscape, Inc. (Disclosure: This reviewer recruited Lundberg to Medscape In 1999, after Lundberg was fired by the AMA for publishing the now famous study on the "Is Oral Sex, Sex?" question during the Clinton impeachment hearings)

In January 1999 George Lundberg, the highly respected editor of the Journal of the American Medical Association, was fired by the AMA. The stated reason for his dismissal was his rushing into print a study of sex that seemed to support President Clinton's dubious definitions of infidelity. But as the media furor rose to fever pitch, it became clear that this "oral sex debacle" was not Lundberg's first brush with controversy. He had outraged the AMA by charging on "60 Minutes" that doctors were burying their mistakes by not performing autopsies, and he had taken strong stands on such hot-button topics as assisted suicide, gun control, alternative medicine, and abortion. In this no-holds-barred book, Lundberg, now editor in chief of the online medical journal Medscape, speaks out on the crisis in contemporary medicine. He charges that organized medicine has surrendered to an overbuilt and overused political-industrial complex that underfunds prevention, undermines scientific research, and overlooks patients' needs-with disastrous results for doctors and patients alike. High costs and managed care are the least of our problems, says Lundberg: the greatest threat is the pervasive erosion of professional standards. Lundberg's keen analysis of greedy doctors, profit-hungry drug companies, and a corrupted AMA that seeks only to protect vested interests is certain to provoke controversy and stimulate debate.

From Publishers Weekly It is by now a cultural commonplace to complain about the medical profession and its lack of professionalism, its interest in profits rather than patients and the outrageous mismanagement of the health insurance industry, but this time the criticism comes from a high-profile insider. Physician and former JAMA editor Lundberg

(he was fired over a Kinsey Institute study about how people define "sex" that appeared during Clinton's impeachment hearings), along with Stacey (Inside the New Temple: The High Cost of Mistaking Medicine for Religion), contends that quality patient care the primary goal of medicine is a casualty of the current emphasis on medicine as business. Lundberg's writing can be plodding and repetitious, but he makes a strong case. He argues for physicians' greater accountability, contending, for instance, that autopsies no longer performed primarily because doctors fear litigation, particularly if it is determined that their diagnosis was incorrect should become regular medical practice again, as they were just 30 years ago. Lundberg also calls for prevention of disease through standard accepted procedures such as immunization and Pap smears that would be free to patients and paid for by government revenues. Further, he proposes an "economic informed consent," in which patients and physicians "would be provided with the costs of care in advance of receiving or providing services." All in all, Lundberg presents a damning indictment of modern American medicine. (Apr.) Forecast: Basic is backing this with a first printing of 50,000. Lundberg is a controversial and visible figure offering strong opinions on a hot topic. This call for reform should sell very well and Lundberg will be expressing his ideas in a radio satellite tour, appealing to a large number of general readers as well as to patients' rights groups, public policy analysts and other physicians. Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. From The New England Journal of Medicine All editors of medical journals are expendable. But the fall, when it comes, is frequently painful and unexpected. Not so for George Lundberg, editor-in-chief of the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) for 17 years: he knew that his sacking in 1999 was inevitable. He had upset too many people for too long a time, and he had courted controversy once too often. His editorial strategy, he has said, was "to deliberately give [readers] something to complain about." Lundberg's wish to tell the truth -- in his words, "no matter how embarrassing, insulting, or offensive" -- had eroded the patience of his corporate superiors at the AMA. His editorship had become so vulnerable that, in the end, it collapsed not on a point of principle or integrity but over his decision to publish a study of students' attitudes about oral sex during the public travails of President Bill Clinton. A sublime career tripped in a ridiculous pothole. Lundberg is rueful about the outcome: "The Monica Lewinsky affair resulted in the loss of my job," he writes, "but not Bill Clinton's." Severed Trust provides his first opportunity for serious payback. Lundberg begins with a series of stinging indictments of the AMA. The present organization has "lost its credibility" and lacks leadership; "has too much money and too little purpose"; and is filled with "bloated senior staff," of which Lundberg was once, of course, a leading member, together with "a group of pampered voluntary officers." Life as an AMA executive involves "inflated per diems and multiple junkets." According to Lundberg, the fact that over two thirds of physicians in the United States refuse to join its ranks proves that the AMA is reviled by its constituency. Lundberg's first dispute with his former employer began after an editorial he wrote about boxing. Declaring that "boxing is an obscenity," he clashed with AMA trustees. From then on he was marked as an irritant. He watched -- horrified, one is led to believe -- as the AMA adopted staunchly pro-Republican policies, campaigned for the interests of doctors rather than patients, failed to protect the fragile mantle of professionalism surrounding physicians, and preferred to fight within its own committees rather than openly on behalf of the public. His departure, when it came, must have been a blessed relief, rather than a personal tragedy. Yet this distinguished pathologist, who began his career in medicine as a hospital orderly mopping floors in Mobile, Alabama, is equally scathing about his clinical colleagues in America. For Lundberg, medicine is a moral vocation, but there has been a "disastrous severance of trust" during his half-century in practice. The origins of this crisis lie in the ways in which doctors, their egos inflated by the prospect of unbridled affluence, have sought new ways to make money from the sick. As a result, professional standards have plummeted. Too many doctors are incompetent, and they now work in a "culture of blame and cover up." Medicine, in Lundberg's eyes, has been seduced by business. Its corridors of power have been infiltrated by "money-grubbers." Powerful specialists have trumpeted their own interests with the covert intention of filling their pockets with profit, irrespective of the risk to patients. These trends have taken place in a health care system "guilty of institutional racism." Lundberg has written a devastating -- and, to an English doctor all too aware of the deficiencies in the National Health Service of the United Kingdom, shocking -- critique of American values and the medical system it has spawned. Lundberg wants doctors to take back their profession, and he believes that they can do so only if they provide a package of basic health care to all citizens. When the uninsured are properly protected, he would make all proven preventive services freely available. To achieve such an ambitious goal, rationing must be embraced, not resisted. As unpleasant an idea as this might seem, the benefits -- charitable care, quality assurance, listening to patients' preferences, tackling health inequalities -- would be overwhelming, and a strengthened, independent Institute of Medicine would nurture the profession in a new era of public trust. Lundberg's polemical memoir has engaging faults. He sometimes attributes too close a connection between pungent editorials or articles published in JAMA and the great turning points in American medical history. He also has an inclination to put himself at the center of national events when, in truth, his role seems to have been rather peripheral (the death of Elvis Presley is one startling example). But this account of a life and its times has the ring of honesty. For instance, Lundberg confesses to fear about publishing research on medical error. He released one such paper in a December holiday issue of JAMA, which he hoped would be missed by vacationing journalists. It was not. He also recognizes that his expulsion from JAMA was to the journal's eventual advantage. Stronger systems to safeguard editorial independence

are now in place. His successor owes him a huge debt. The personal lesson I take from Severed Trust is that every so often an editor of a medical journal must be sacrificed just to remind doctors why they need editors at all. My feeling is that history will record that George Lundberg was among the best. Richard Horton, M.B., Ch.B., F.R.C.P. Copyright copy; 2001 Massachusetts Medical Society. All rights reserved. The New England Journal of Medicine is a registered trademark of the MMS. From Booklist After 17 years as editor of the Journal of the American Medical Association, the AMA booted Lundberg out in 1999. But the trained pathologist still thinks like one, and he also carries his view of his role as editor of a major medical journal--"It wasn't my desire, but my duty, to be an irritant"--into this book, coauthored with another AMA veteran. The major requirement for fixing American medicine is for physicians to wrest their profession from the clutches of business, say the authors: medical decisions should be made by doctors, not insurance clerks. After all, for whose benefit is health care provided? The quality of a medical procedure, they insist, should be determined by its efficacy, not by advertising, and in the long run, prevention is far more important than cure. Furthermore, real reform will require some rationing of medical care, the abolition of "futile care," and the return of meaningful physician-patient relations. An important book that should stimulate productive discussion. William Beatty Copyright copy; American Library Association. All rights reserved