

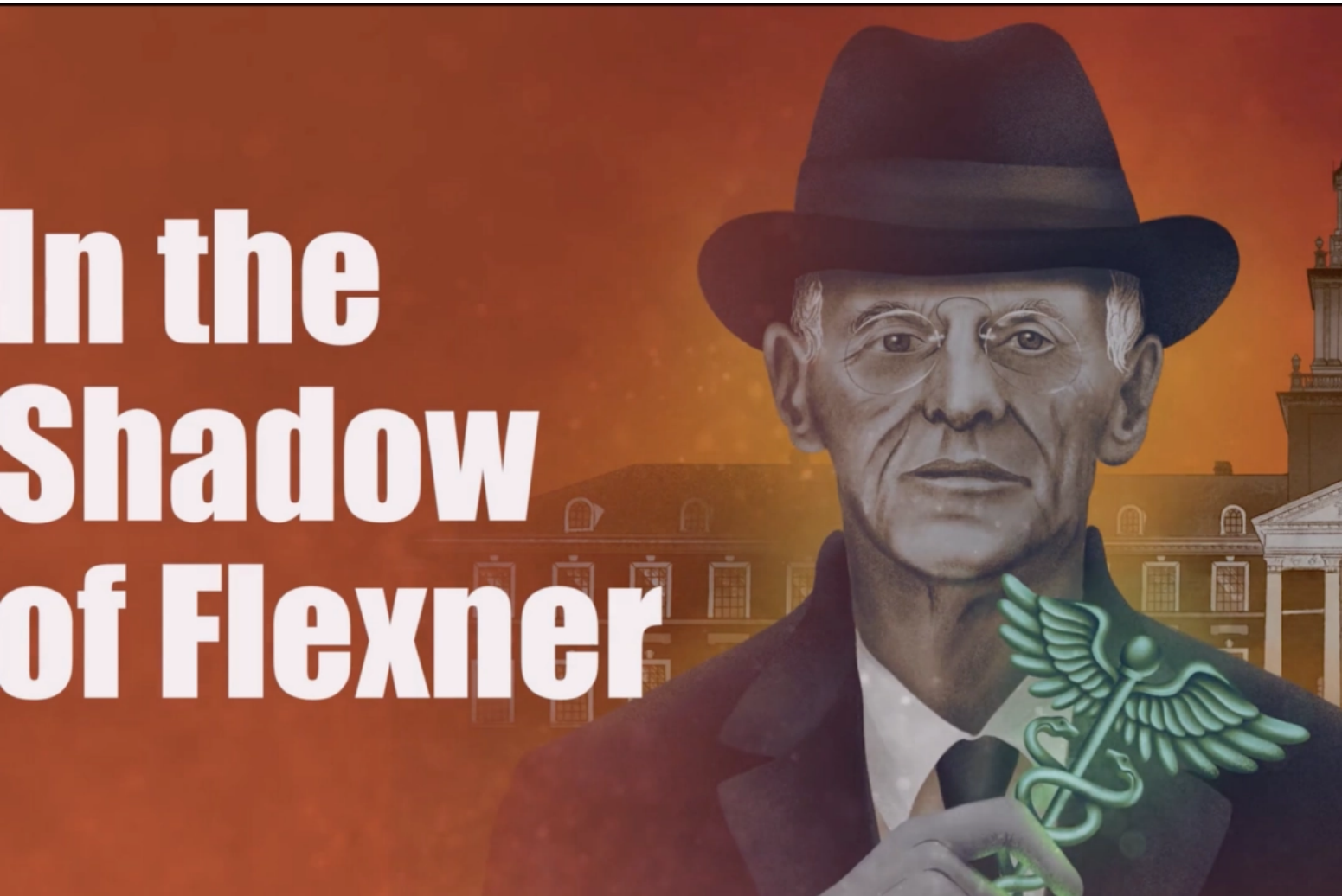
# The Road to Big Pharma and Medical Corruption

How one document overtook medical education and corrupted health care for a century.


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Screenshot from the EpochTV documentary “In the Shadow of Flexner” (EpochTV)

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By Emily Allison  
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“In the Shadow of Flexner,” available on [EpochTV](#), is a groundbreaking documentary film by Justin Smith that exposes the century-old corruption that forever altered the trajectory of health care. At the heart of this riveting narrative lies the Flexner Report, a document published in 1910 with the insidious purpose of eradicating all traces of natural medicine from the educational landscape.

# MEDICAL EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

A REPORT TO  
THE CARNEGIE FOUNDATION  
FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF TEACHING

BY  
ABRAHAM FLEXNER

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
HENRY S. PRITCHETT  
PRESIDENT OF THE FOUNDATION

Video footage from the EpochTV documentary “In the Shadow of Flexner” about the road to corruption in modern medicine. (Screenshot)

## The State of Health Today

The film recognizes the advancements made by modern medicine, such as the discovery of penicillin. It features several doctors with a range of specialties. According to Dr. Suneel Dhand, a physician of internal medicine, there was a dramatic increase in life expectancy in the early part of the last century. Although the life expectancy was not entirely due to new medications, the use of antibiotics and other interventions and acute care options are no doubt life-saving. Yet despite advances in medicine, people are not getting healthier.

This is seen with the rise of chronic diseases. A chronic disease is defined as symptoms lasting over a year and requiring ongoing medical treatment. As of 2023, the CDC estimates that 60 percent of adults in the United States have at least one chronic disease, and more

than 40 percent have two or more chronic diseases. This has been increasing rapidly since 2012 when the number of adults with a chronic disease was only 25 percent.

It has been suggested that the reason more people are suffering from chronic disease now is due to longer life expectancy. However, this is disproved by the fact that increasing numbers of young people have a chronic disease, with 18-34-year-olds now having the same prevalence of chronic disease as the general adult population. In 2019, 54 percent of 18-34-year-olds in the United States had at least one chronic condition, and 22 percent had more than one condition.

At the same time, more money than ever before is being spent on health, with health spending outpacing the rest of the global economy, according to the United Nations. But the more money being spent, the sicker people have become. In addition, treatment options geared at symptom suppression and overprescribing have become the norm, as well as a fundamental lack of education regarding nutrition and how the various functions of the body are connected. Many issues in Western medicine appear to prioritize prescriptions and band-aide solutions over true healing. The documentary asks the question, why?

## **The Scientific Revolution**

In 1910, Abraham Flexner published a report about the status of medical education in North America. The report led to all forms of natural medicine being eliminated from medical schools and paved the way for the pharmaceutical industry to dominate Western medicine. The report was a milestone in forming the industrial medical complex, but as far back as the 1700s, thinkers such as Francis Bacon and Rene Descartes abandoned Aristotles' holistic philosophy. Instead, they started a scientific revolution for a new line of thinking, believing that only what could be measured in a specific way was valid.

The Industrial Revolution, about a century later, required machines and the creation of the factory system. All of this was made possible by the application of the scientific method. Modern medicine was born at a time when society was embracing industrial capitalism. They wanted to apply what they had learned in industry to health care.

At the same time, orthodox doctors were feared by the public, with invasive and sometimes disastrous treatments. Herbalists were more popular and sought out. Orthodox doctors felt they had to eliminate the competition and raise their own standing in culture. Taking over education in the medical industry was the first step and revolved around Johns Hopkins University and the American Medical Association.

## One Flawed Report Shaped the Landscape of Medicine

The [EpochTV](#) film takes viewers to a circle of men called “the Hopkins group.” These individuals were connected to Johns Hopkins University and the Rockefeller and Carnegie Foundations. They recruited Abraham Flexner to the group, although he was not a medical expert but an educator. According to the documentary, they believed this would aid in the report’s acceptance as educators were viewed in higher esteem than doctors. His task was to visit the medical schools in North America and publish a report on the teaching methods being used. Rather than approach the task with an open mind, he set out with a host of preconceived notions and biases.

The belief system that Johns Hopkins University was founded on was centered around the German approach to medical education, which espoused the idea that the advancement of scientific knowledge was the main goal of the physician, while the role of the patient was to serve the doctor and facilitate the scientific process rather than the other way around. The Hopkins Circle of men wanted to replicate the German model across America. Therefore, Mr. Flexner evaluated each school in this context. The 155 schools he visited were categorized only according to how closely they fit specific criteria, such as the size of the institution and the quality of laboratory equipment. According to the documentary, there does not appear to be any assessment of actual patient benefit. Many schools fell short of the Hopkins Circle’s expectations, leaving some schools closed and the Rockefeller and Carnegie Foundations giving financial support to the remaining schools. The report was also distributed to Europe by a trustee of the Carnegie Foundation, influencing the medical industry in Europe.

# Profit Over Patients

But the problems didn't stop with the report. The tycoons of the day realized the potential for money to be made in the medical industry and pharmaceutical products. Many of these products were byproducts of the petrochemical industry at the time. They wanted to sway doctors towards using these products instead of Native American methods and alternative solutions that were still widely practiced. The result, the film argues, was the birth of a medical industry, not a health industry.

Some argue that moving doctors towards the role of a scientist rather than a healer has led to a lasting effect on how doctors relate to their patients and the loss of the soul of medicine. Treating patients with protocol rather than the individual needs of patients suits the pharmaceutical industry, with pill pushing and prescriptions. This robotic-like treatment approach is pitted against those who want to save the art of healing and serving the patient.

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March 3, 2020

## Profitability of Large Pharmaceutical Companies Compared With Other Large Public Companies

Fred D. Ledley, MD<sup>1,2</sup>; Sarah Shonka McCoy, PhD<sup>3,4</sup>; Gregory Vaughan, PhD<sup>5</sup>; [et al](#)

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Video footage from the EpochTV documentary "In the Shadow of Flexner" about the road to corruption in modern medicine. (Screenshot)

## Pharmaceutical Corruption

The film shows how the pharmaceutical industry has become more involved in medicine and expanded significantly in recent decades. In

2001, the global pharmaceutical industry was valued at \$390 billion. In 2021, it had grown to \$1.45 trillion. The pharmaceutical industry is nearly four times bigger now than 20 years ago, with profit margins significantly greater than S&P 500 companies.

The film shows how much of this increase has been gained through nefarious activities, such as fraud, failure to report drug safety data, unlawful prescriptions, bribery, and kickbacks to physicians who prescribe them. These examples are well documented by lawsuits and payouts. One example is a case in 2012 where GlaxoSmithKline, a pharmaceutical company, was ordered to pay \$300 billion to resolve allegations of fraud and failure to report drug safety data. According to the Department of Justice, from 1998 to 2003, the company unlawfully promoted the drug Paxil for treating depression in those under the age of 18. However, the FDA never approved Paxil for pediatric use. In 2001, GlaxoSmithKline published a misleading medical journal article in the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry that stated in its conclusion that the drug was “generally well tolerated and effective for major depression in adolescents,” even though the data showed the drug was ineffective and did more harm than good. This was not a lone incident, with the company using the same tactics with several other medicines and providing kickbacks to doctors.

The \$300 billion fine GlaxoSmithKline had to pay may sound substantial, but the fine proved minuscule compared to the total revenue for those drugs during the period in question. The pharmaceutical company profited at least \$28 billion from the drug, making the fine only one-tenth of the money made. The film begs the question, could the slight slap on the wrist be considered an acceptable cost of doing business by pharmaceutical companies?

Furthermore, the misleading article was never corrected and is still available to this day, with its incorrect conclusions. No apologies or retractions have ever been issued. In 2013, a team of researchers reanalyzed the data from the trial and found the situation was worse than initially thought. The drug was found to be no better than a placebo while also having 2.6 times the number of severe adverse effects and causing 11 times more suicide attempts than the placebo. The researchers also found a failure to follow trial protocol and misreporting of the adverse effects.

The documentary shows other similar cases that support claims of pharmaceutical companies getting away with criminal activity over and over again. Johnson and Johnson, Pfizer, and nearly every pharmaceutical company have similar stories, often peddling their drugs under false pretenses to the most vulnerable populations, such as children, the elderly, or the mentally disabled. Furthermore, some of the drugs even resulted in death counts that rival major catastrophes, such as the number of deaths caused by the 911 terrorist attacks. Even so, the revenue generated is typically more than enough to cover any fines associated, leaving viewers with the harrowing revelation that corporations are allowed to cause the deaths of tens of thousands of people and walk away with a profit.

## Medical Censorship

Unlike the goal of the Flexner Report, which was to consolidate methods of medical practice, the film argues that science flourishes with free discourse, diverse discussion, and disagreement. However, it claims that recent years have worked to silence alternative views and dissent among doctors and scientists. The documentary presents a compelling case for why scientific discussions should be aired publicly, in print, and for others to see and learn. However, the physicians interviewed say it is frightening how little discourse is even allowed in their industry. The film's message is that all medicine has its place, and by working together, patients can receive the treatments needed to provide true healing.





Video footage from the EpochTV documentary “In the Shadow of Flexner” about the road to corruption in modern medicine. (Screenshot)

## Conclusion

Through compelling storytelling and jaw-dropping revelations, “In the Shadow of Flexner,” available on [EpochTV](#), takes audiences on a gripping journey through the annals of medical history. It challenges viewers to question the ethical foundations of a health care system that, despite its triumphs, has left countless individuals in the shadows of profit-driven decision-making. As the world grapples with escalating health care costs and an alarming surge in chronic illnesses, this documentary serves as a poignant call to reevaluate the priorities that shape the future of global health and whether there are methods of medicine that empower patients over corporations and prioritize healing over profit.

Watch “[In the Shadow of Flexner](#)” on EpochTV [here](#).

*Views expressed in this article are opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.*

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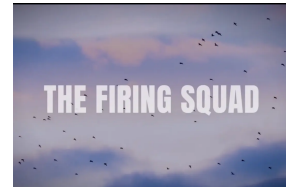
Emily is a writer for The Epoch Times and a freelance political journalist. With an extensive background in Political Communication and Journalism, she is committed to serving her country by bringing the truth about important issues of the day to the American people.

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