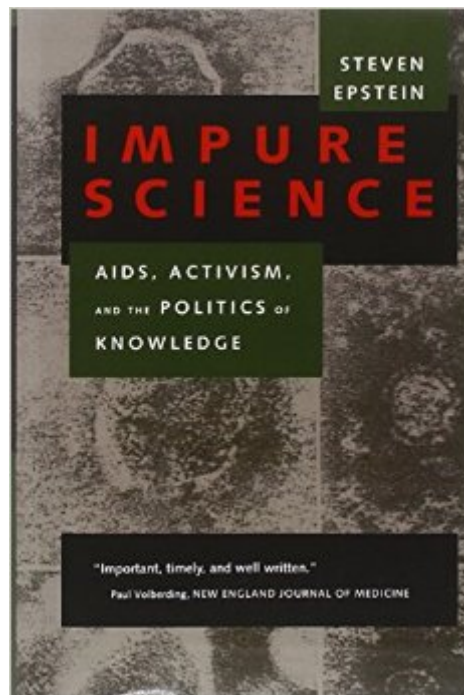


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Impure Science: AIDS, Activism, And The Politics Of Knowledge (Medicine And Society)



Synopsis

In the short, turbulent history of AIDS research and treatment, the boundaries between scientist insiders and lay outsiders have been crisscrossed to a degree never before seen in medical history. Steven Epstein's astute and readable investigation focuses on the critical question of "how certainty is constructed or deconstructed," leading us through the views of medical researchers, activists, policy makers, and others to discover how knowledge about AIDS emerges out of what he calls "credibility struggles." Epstein shows the extent to which AIDS research has been a social and political phenomenon and how the AIDS movement has transformed biomedical research practices through its capacity to garner credibility by novel strategies. Epstein finds that nonscientist AIDS activists have gained enough of a voice in the scientific world to shape NIH's sponsored research to a remarkable extent. Because of the blurring of roles and responsibilities, the production of biomedical knowledge about AIDS does not, he says, follow the pathways common to science; indeed, AIDS research can only be understood as a field that is unusually broad, public, and contested. He concludes by analyzing recent moves to democratize biomedicine, arguing that although AIDS activists have set the stage for new challenges to scientific authority, all social movements that seek to democratize expertise face unusual difficulties. Avoiding polemics and accusations, Epstein provides a benchmark account of the AIDS epidemic to date, one that will be as useful to activists, policy makers, and general readers as to sociologists, physicians, and scientists.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book is a must-read for anyone working on infectious disease pandemics. But it is also an important read for activists who are beginning to understand the workings of complex adaptive systems. The author does a wonderful job of gathering information from the many fronts on which activists, scientists, docs, government regulators, and the infected frantically worked in the United States to stem the rising tide of death from AIDS. From the point at which the sentinel systems were picking up the emergence of this new disease, to the race against the clock for treatments and scientific understanding, the book covers the many policy and practical arenas in which people fought for themselves and their loved ones to beat death from this virulent, frightening infectious agent. It talks about scientific authority and de-mystifies the scientific enterprise while wondering whether this reduces the authority of science...but does not propose a solution to this dilemma. A terrific ethnography for students and for social activists of a time of great emergency, it is sure to stimulate much discussion. Sincere, careful, respectful of all players in this drama, the book teaches us about the social interactions required to handle such horrible emergencies. Someone needs to look the same way at the AIDS syndemic in Africa. It is too bad that the folks who were looking at healthcare reform did not have this author's insightful study to help them get us ready for the next pandemic. Because, have no doubt, there WILL be one.

I was very happy with the price and the transaction was easy. The book had all pages intact and had no markings.

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