

Book Review

***Worst Pills Best Pills:
A Consumer's Guide to Avoiding Drug-Induced Death or Illness
And Companion for Use With the 1999 Edition***

Written by Sidney M. Wolfe, MD, Larry D. Sasich, Pharm.D., MPH,
Rose-Ellen Hope, R. Ph., & Public Citizen's Health Research Group
Pocket Books, NY, NY, \$20.00

Reviewed by Judith A. Greenfield, PhD, RN
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Open these books and you will find, on the front inside covers, "10 Rules for Safer Drug Use". Turn your eyes to the right and you'll see lists of drugs which, when paired and taken together, can cause life-threatening drug interactions. Turn the page and only then will you find the book's title with its publication information. That's how serious these authors are about helping patients avoid becoming one of 100,000 who die and 1.5 million who are hospitalized each year as a result of mostly preventable adverse (harmful) reactions to prescription drugs.

The reasons why this is happening are explained in detail. They include misprescribing and overprescribing, along with pressure to speed up the FDA approval process – something that has resulted in the approval of numerous drugs that were later withdrawn from the market because they were found to be unsafe. The approval process, however, remains sped up. What can be done about all this? How can you as a patient or an advocate help prevent these often-preventable drug-induced deaths and injuries?

With the help of these books, you can inform yourself. In addition to chapters on: the evidence and causes of misprescribing and overprescribing; the seriousness and frequency of adverse drug reactions; how to protect yourself and others from preventable drug-induced injury; and how to save money and avoid injury when buying prescription drugs, the combined books offer information on a total of 519 commonly prescribed drugs.

Based on their own research, and in consultation with various medical specialists, the authors indicate which of those 519 drugs warrant labels such as "Do Not Use," "Do Not Use Until Seven Years After Release," "Last Choice Drug," or "Limited Use." If negative recommendations are made, they generally suggest alternatives. They also provide information you should know before and when you use the drug, as well as information on: how to use the drug; interactions with other drugs; adverse effects; and

periodic medical tests that may be needed while taking the drugs. For more information visit [Public Citizen](#) online or call them at **1-202-588-1000** to order these books.ف

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