

press release

Episode description

AIR: AMERICA'S INVESTIGATIVE REPORTS

Episode 102, "A Bitter Pill"

Every prescription medicine you take is tested on humans before it's approved for sale and use by the FDA. But if you assumed those tests are always done smartly, safely and ethically under the watchful eye of expert regulators, you would be very, very wrong.

Perhaps even dead wrong.

That's what a team of investigative reporters from *Bloomberg Markets* magazine discovered in a yearlong investigation culminating in a devastating, award-winning report called "Big Pharma's Shameful Secret." The magazine, an award-winning publication about business and finances published monthly by Bloomberg News, shared with readers the closely-held secret that "across the U.S., the centers that do the testing – and the regulators who watch them – allow scores of people to be injured or killed."

Approximately 3.7 million people in the U.S. have enrolled in drug tests sponsored by the world's largest pharmaceutical companies. Each test requires stringent scientific and ethical standards. But the nation's biggest drug companies now farm out 75 percent of experimental drug trials to for-profit centers whose practices are monitored by *other* for-profit companies, all of them paid by "Big Pharma." This conflict of interest, as the magazine reports, has led to egregious incidents.

Narrated by award-winning reporter Sylvia Chase, *AIR* vividly brings the magazine's explosive findings to life through interviews with victims and their families. Equally disturbing is the story of volunteers who enroll in more than one clinical trial at a time, in clear violation of both scientific and ethical protocol. *AIR* also includes an interview with an Argentine immigrant who says he received over \$13,000 for participating in three clinical trials during the same period at two Miami testing companies, of which was with SFBC, at the time North America's largest for-profit clinical trials company. When the Bloomberg report was published, SFBC threatened this man with deportation if he did not recant his statements to the magazine.

Bloomberg Markets' investigation into the seamy underside of clinical drug trials won a coveted Investigative Reporters and Editors Certificate and a George Polk Award for Health Reporting. It led to a congressional investigation into human testing and to the resignation of some top executives at SFBC.

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Press Contact:

Caroline Oman

212.560.3057

oman@thirteen.org

Gloria Park

212.560.2063

parkg@thirteen.org