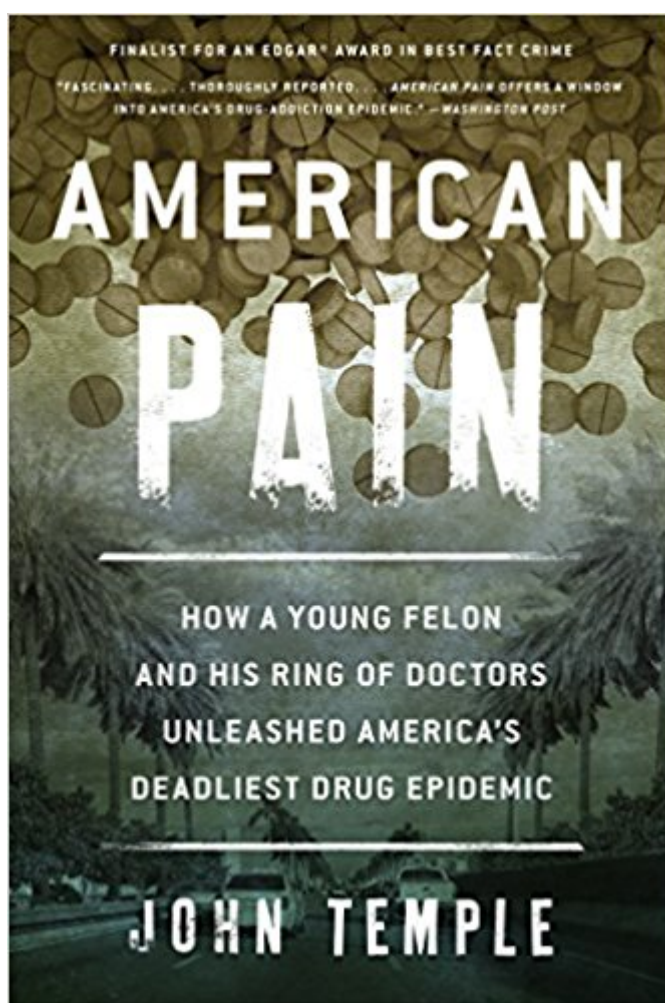


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American Pain: How A Young Felon And His Ring Of Doctors Unleashed America's Deadliest Drug Epidemic



Synopsis

* Finalist for the Edgar® Award in Best Fact Crime * New York Post, "The Post's Favorite Books of 2015" * Suspense Magazine's "Best True Crime Books of 2015" * Finalist for Foreword Reviews' INDIEFAB Book of the Year in True Crime * Publishers Weekly, Big Indie Book of Fall 2015

The king of the Florida pill mills was American Pain, a mega-clinic expressly created to serve addicts posing as patients. From a fortress-like former bank building, American Pain's doctors distributed massive quantities of oxycodone to hundreds of customers a day, mostly traffickers and addicts who came by the vanload. Inked muscle-heads ran the clinic's security. Former strippers operated the pharmacy, counting out pills and stashing cash in garbage bags. Under their lab coats, the doctors carried guns "and it was all legal" sort of. American Pain was the brainchild of Chris George, a 27-year-old convicted drug felon. The son of a South Florida home builder, Chris George grew up in ultra-rich Wellington, where Bill Gates, Springsteen, and Madonna kept houses. Thick-necked from weightlifting, he and his twin brother hung out with mobsters, invested in strip clubs, brawled with cops, and grinned for their mug shots. After the housing market stalled, a local doctor clued in the brothers to the burgeoning underground market for lightly regulated prescription painkillers. In Florida, pain clinics could dispense the meds, and no one tracked the patients. Seizing the opportunity, Chris George teamed up with the doctor, and word got out. Just two years later Chris had raked in \$40 million, and 90 percent of the pills his doctors prescribed flowed north to feed the rest of the country's insatiable narcotics addiction. Meanwhile, hundreds more pain clinics in the mold of American Pain had popped up in the Sunshine State, creating a gigantic new drug industry. American Pain chronicles the rise and fall of this game-changing pill mill, and how it helped tip the nation into its current opioid crisis, the deadliest drug epidemic in American history. The narrative swings back and forth between Florida and Kentucky, and is populated by a gaudy and diverse cast of characters. This includes the incongruous band of wealthy bad boys, thugs and esteemed physicians who built American Pain, as well as penniless Kentucky clans who transformed themselves into painkiller trafficking rings. It includes addicts whose lives were devastated by American Pain's drugs, and the federal agents and grieving mothers who labored for years to bring the clinic's crew to justice.

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Customer Reviews

Fascinating. . . . thoroughly reported. . . . American Pain offers a window into America's drug-addiction epidemic. (The Washington Post)(Starred Review). . . . [An] exhilarating blow-by-blow account. . . . Journalism professor Temple dissects the . . . criminal operation and documents the rise and fall of American Pain with precision and authority in this highly readable true crime account. (Publishers Weekly) "John Temple's American Pain takes you on a hysterically funny, yet equally tragic, tour of Florida's pill mill industry as the painkiller epidemic was reaching a fever pitch.... a must-read for anyone trying to understand this government-sanctioned drug and the destructive power of Big Pharma." "Melisa Wallack, Oscar-nominated co-writer of Dallas Buyers Club "American Pain made me angrier with every page. Why? Because John Temple has so adeptly reported this story of how a handful of criminals and shady doctors in Florida profited from the poverty and addiction of the Appalachian South." "James Higdon, national bestselling author of The Cornbread Mafia: A Homegrown Syndicate's Code of Silence and the Biggest Marijuana Bust in American History "John Temple's American Pain is as addicting a read as the little pills he writes about. Temple details the brazen operations of some of America's largest pill mills and how they thrived in plain sight for years before the government took action." "Jason Ryan, author of Jackpot: High Times, High Seas, and the Sting That Launched the War on Drugs In his masterful nonfiction book American Pain, John Temple lays bare the perfect storm of lax regulation, aggressive marketing, greed, and addiction that created an opioid epidemic. . . . Temple's writing is propulsive (Foreword Magazine)

[Deadhouse is] fascinating | Temple invests his subjects with a warm humanity, providing insight into lives that are not nearly as glamorous as they appear in television dramas, but far more

interesting. (Pittsburgh Tribune-Review)[Deadhouse gives] an insider's view of one of the country's most misunderstood professions. (Charleston Gazette)Writing evenly and efficiently, [in Deadhouse] Temple will enlighten fans of the CSI television shows. Teens, especially fans of CSI and Mary Roach's Stiff, will find the perspectives from two college-age interns particularly involving. (Booklist) --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

As someone who worked in law enforcement in southern WV, Professor Temple's book shines a light on how so many pills came flooding into WV and KY. The book goes a long way in explaining why so many became addicted. It further illustrates why states and the federal government need to work together to end this scourge. A fascinating book!

I was aware that there was an opium epidemic, but I didn't know the specifics of how, when, and where it all started. This book was an eye opener. My ill-informed view of the opium problem was that people who were addicted to pain medication were buying the drugs illegally and duping the system by going to multiple pharmacies to have a prescription filled. I was not aware of the extent to which big pharma has become more like drug kingpins. I had no idea that a pain pill like Oxycontin was essentially legalized heroin. It's easy to see how so many Americans have become addicted. It starts with a prescription for pain medication. Maybe the pain is a result of an injury or surgery. Whatever the cause, the patient becomes dependent on the drugs. From that point on it is a downward spiral that affects all aspects of that person's life. The book American Pain takes readers to the epicenter of the opium epidemic. Two characters right out of Breaking Bad get the ball rolling. Chris George and Derik Nolan are the Walter White and Jesse Pinkman real life counterparts. They start their fledgling enterprise in Florida, a state that had no regulations covering pain clinics. Advertising for doctors on Craigslist, Chris and his cohorts amass a fortune of more than forty million dollars in just over two years. How did they do it? It starts with a clueless state government and a lack of oversight. With no one minding the store, Chris, and his employees are allowed to open multiple pill mills. They cater exclusively to addicts. It's legal drug dealing. Even after Broward County Florida becomes the epicenter of the Opium epidemic and the reality of what is happening becomes apparent, the newly elected Governor, Rick Scott, decides to shut down all efforts to get control over the situation. Too much regulation is his defense. Well, guess what Governor Scott? It was the lack of regulations that made your state responsible for thousands of overdose deaths and countless people turning into drug addicts. Only after pressure from all sides does Scott relent and regulators finally put a stop to the flow of pills. Rather than going after the pill mills, wholesalers, and

pharmaceutical industries, the cops and DEA focus on the addicts. They tear families apart by imprisoning addicts whose only crime is purchasing a legal pill outside of a pill mill. Pharmaceutical CEOs meanwhile become millionaires pushing addictive drugs, all the while denying that the drugs are addictive.

This was a terrific book: part American tragedy, part Donald Westlake crime caper. At the same time, it exposes a real problem, one that is far from being solved. In lean prose, Temple takes us inside a horrifying scam, and helps us understand how it happened and how it could cause such heartbreak. He makes these people -- the pill mill operators and doctors and victims and junkies -- real to us, so that we can understand why the scammers did what they did, why the addicts can't quit, -- yet he makes us see the danger of pill addiction, which can seem just like another headline until *American Pain* exposes the real depths of the problem. As a book, it's enthralling. I was reading it on a flight that had a stop on the way, but I was among the passengers who was supposed to stay on the plane. We land at the interim stop, people start getting off, but I think, hey, I just stay on the plane. I'm reading *American Pain*, and I'm caught up in it. Then I look up, and no other passengers are on the plane. The stewardess strolls by, "Didn't you get the memo?" she says. "We had to bring in a new plane." That's a gripping book. Anyway, I caught my connecting flight, read Temple's book the whole way. A good read, an important book.

First, I don't want anyone to suffer needlessly from disease or injury- there always have been, and likely will be for a long time, people with serious chronic pain. A person with moderate osteoarthritis can need what looks like a shocking number of pills to stay functional, but they aren't 'getting high' from properly scheduled doses of medicine. If a patient's never abused their prescription, they deserve relief without suspicion. But then these utter gangsters find a few unscrupulous or naïve doctors to prescribe massive quantities of drugs to addicts, and leave death, destruction, and addiction in their wake. The irony is that the 'managers' could have made a tidy income by establishing a stable, legitimate pain-specialist medical practice- but they couldn't resist chasing the bigger high. Absolutely worth reading to understand the intersection of pain and profit in the modern age.

This is an extremely important book. If you are interested in the role of profiteering and the fostering of addictions by the pharmaceutical (legal and not) and health care industries, get this book. Living in West Virginia, I am seeing first hand the disaster this has caused, as people of all ages and

classes are turned into opiate addicts. They have lost their children, their homes and self worth. They are physically and psychologically shadows of their former selves, while the behavioral health system struggles to deal with the avalanche of addicts. From a public policy perspective, Temple calls for greater controls on the supply of opiates, something that can yet be addressed. Told in a page turning style, this is a sobering look (no pun intended) that is causing many of us to discuss how we can create more effective approaches that limit access while providing treatment to those in need.

American Pain is one of the best true crime books I ever read. The Pill Mills in Florida seriously contributed to the opiate epidemic we have in this country. I am from WV and have the highest rate of overdose death in the country. The book is like reading a suspense novel however, it is all true. Temple's research was thorough and his description of the characters made them come alive. He is nominated for an Edgar Award for best true crime and deserves to win.

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