

This Book Could Make You Sick to Your Stomach

A review of Squandering Billions

When was the last time you read a book that contained a message so essential to your wellbeing that it made you sick to your stomach? This happens to each of us on a daily basis when we watch the news on television or read a newspaper, and we are accosted with the various abuses that take place within the general population, as well as in the political, business and health-care environments.

The publication *Squandering Billions* is one such text. It is a story that has existed for years but has not been illustrated, in Canada, in such a blatant, unpretentious and direct fashion. It will make you sick to your stomach. But, unfortunately, that is a price that we must all pay for the information that is so important to be familiar with. From the introduction to the final words, readers will be attacked with information that is so disquieting as to raise their blood pressure. It is the obligation of every health-care practitioner to be knowledgeable on the subject matter of the text.

The book sets out what appears to be political and medical bashing. While the uninformed may perceive the text as a diatribe into the areas of medicine and politics, such an opinion would be superficial and not do justice to the big picture that the publication provides. It may be that there is a wealth of information suggesting that there are rampant cost overruns relating to every aspect of health care, but that may be just as prevalent in other industries. The difference is the effect of overruns on individual health care.

The reader is accosted with data, references and quotations dealing with the difficulties that have arisen and exist within the health-care industry and its professions. (Very serious consideration is given to delineating the differences between what is a professional issue and what is a business issue.) The facts are disheartening. But turning a deaf ear or blind eye to the situation, which has and continues to exist, will only lead to the continued rationale that is provided to the problem. Turning away will also continue to create what appear to be insurmountable odds for the public to overcome in order to obtain necessary health care from all qualified health-care professionals, who should be accessible to the public.

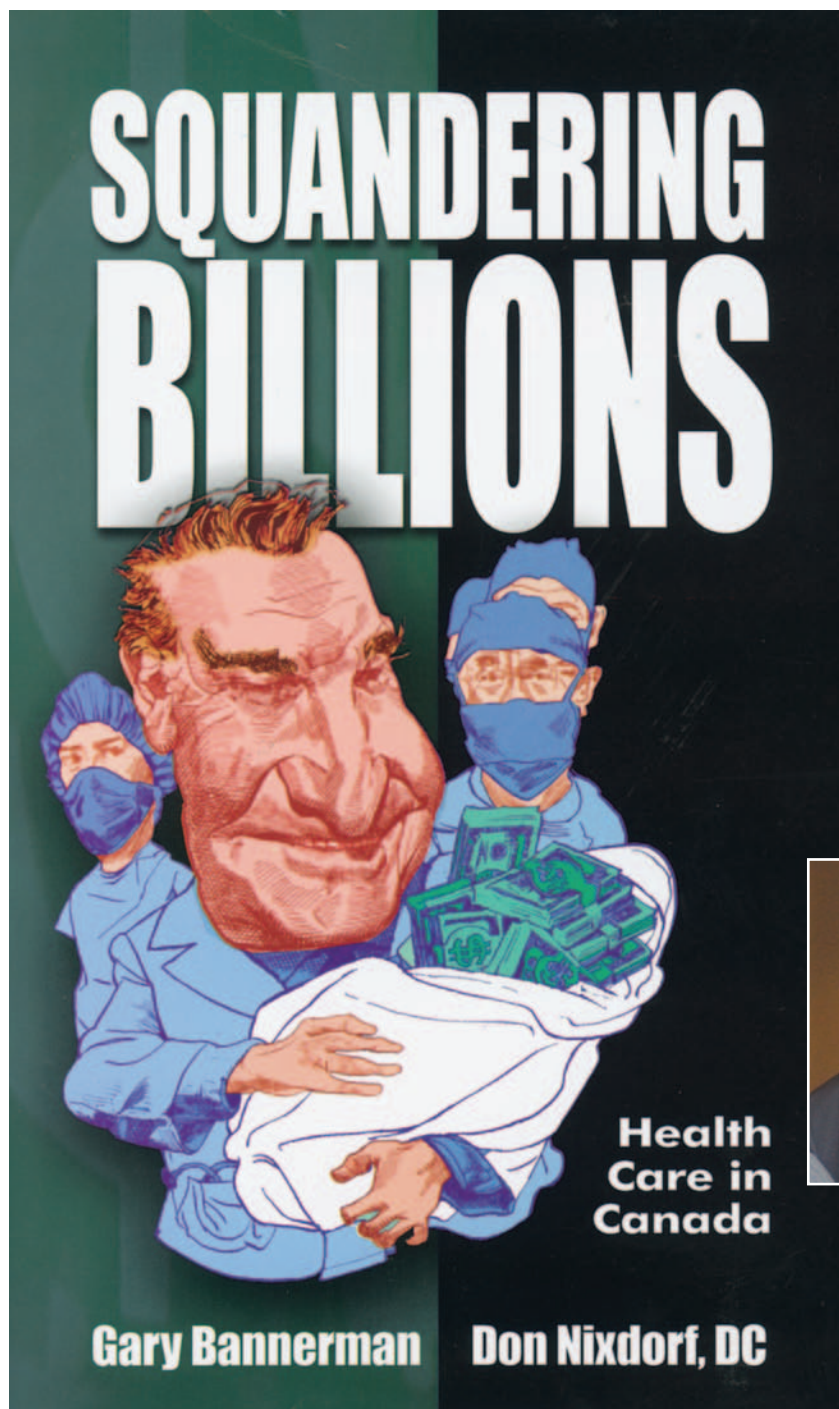
Gary Bannerman uses his skills as a journalist to provide the facts in a manner that leaves little to the imagination. From the outset, the senses are bombarded with details of what has turned Canadian health care from the gem that it was conceived to be into not much more than a small part of a coal heap, existing, in part, in spite of and not because of the system in which it was created. Dr. Don Nixdorf provides his extensive background of participation within the chiropractic profession, and his knowledge of the politics of health care. While the information may occasionally travel from the factual to the editorial, it leaves little to the imagination.

Allan Freedman, LLB, is a practising lawyer who also teaches and presents on risk management and practice management. He has lectured to chiropractors, medical doctors, naturopaths, homeopaths, and other health-care practitioners across Canada. Additionally, he has written extensively in the areas of risk management and health-care economics. Mr. Freedman has an extensive background in matters involving health-care issues, including the representation of health-care professionals before licensing boards and audit committees, and he represents health-care professionals in the acquisition or disposition of their practices.



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allowing it to fester uncontrolled.

It is this reader's belief that it is likely that, as Canadians, we, unfortunately, will do the polite thing and complain and be miserable, but at the same time we will assume that the politics of the problem will unlikely be changed. This problem is, however, a disease that requires immediate attention. Failure is not an option. Having been provided with the results of commissions and investigations dealing with health care, let us just pray that the next suggestion to deal with the problem is not another royal commission.

So what is to be done with a publication such as *Squandering Billions*? My advice is to read it once, and then again, and then periodically at least once a year. Send a copy to your political representatives and put a copy in your waiting room. Beware, however: the copy that you place in your waiting room is likely to find a new home with one of your patients – and don't blame the patient. Allowing patients to review the text, even if partially and briefly, will undoubtedly lead



them to the conclusion that it is absolutely necessary to struggle through the pains of becoming educated with the facts set out in *Squandering Billions*. Better yet, start a library service, and educate all of your patients – it can only help us all! •

How has Canadian health care fallen into dangerous mediocrity, and why should people challenge the forces that hold absolute power within the system? These are topics boldly discussed in Squandering Billions, co-authored by Don Nixdorf, DC (above), and journalist Garry Bannerman.

The reader is given a clear picture of villains within the system as well as heroes. Within an exposé of heartache, and misspent energies and resources, financial and otherwise, there are beacons of light, as in the case of Dr. Pran Manga. I must admit to being somewhat surprised that, within the minute details of abuses, there was a chapter devoted to a person who has spent his life overcoming obstacles to arrive at a point in time where he could provide specific information to benefit the health care of Canadians. Alas, as in the other examples throughout the book, this apparently has been to no avail.

After a complete read of the text, the reader will be in a position to reference independent chapters, which provide stand-alone details and data concerning the issues raised by the authors. The re-reading of particular chapters reinforces the crisis that has evolved, and the dire consequences of

“There is a strong chiropractic component to the book because we believe this may be the most outstanding example anywhere about how care can be improved for millions of patients, pain reduced or eliminated without drugs or surgery, and billions of dollars saved for society, freeing up resources for other purposes. But it is not just about chiropractic. The bottom line is that the health system must find ways to bypass expensive gatekeepers who add no value to the health-care process and frequently promote remedies that do more harm than good. Patients must more expeditiously be routed toward the most effective, efficient, and economical solution for whatever ails them.”

—Gary Bannerman, *Squandering Billions*