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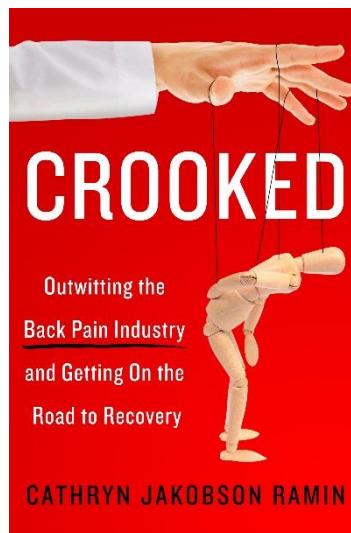
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CROOKED:

Outwitting the Back Pain Industry and Getting on the Road to Recovery

By

Cathryn Jakobson Ramin



”[A] comprehensive investigation...as a human lab rat, the author took notes while being examined in her underwear (a first, she observes, “in over three decades as an investigative reporter”) and observed disc surgery while cloaked in scrubs[CROOKED] is a riveting exposé of the back-pain industry, critiquing such common treatments as lumbar spinal fusion, epidural spinal injections, and opioid prescription. . . .This book will be of particular interest to back-pain sufferers and health care professionals.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“[A] thoroughly reported first-person take on the back-pain industry . . . Buyer beware! This cautionary book ends on a high note with the once-hobbled-by-back-pain author standing up straight and hiking a 13,000-foot trail in the Peruvian Andes.”

—**Booklist**

“*Crooked* is a well-researched and fascinating read detailing the heart-wrenching experience so common to millions of back pain sufferers. Jakobson Ramin exposes the devastating financial and emotional cost of back pain—she herself went through the many medical options presented to patients, from surgery to opioid medication to the many varieties of manual therapy. Ultimately, her in-depth research lights the way to a better path for healing.”

—**MIRANDA ESMONDE-WHITE**, author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Forever Painless*

“In *Crooked*, Cathryn Jakobson Ramin offers a thoughtful and heartfelt way through the maze of painkillers, hot packs, electrical stimulation, ultrasound, laser therapy, chiropractors, miracle balms, massage balls, steroid injections, physical therapy, and spinal surgeries used to treat one of humankind’s most debilitating disorders—chronic back pain. A remarkable guide from someone who unfortunately had to make the journey, and found her way out.”

—**PAUL A. OFFIT, MD**, author of *Pandora’s Lab: Seven Stories of Science Gone Wrong*

“I see back pain patients who have undergone invasive procedures before they go through evidence-based rehabilitation. In a most engaging way, Cathryn Jakobson Ramin tells it like it is. Whether you’re a patient, a physician, or a public policy wonk, you should read this book.”

—**VIJAY VAD, MD**, sports medicine specialist at the Hospital for Special Surgery, and author of *Back RX*

“Cathryn Jakobson Ramin has written a riveting and disturbing account of a sector of American medicine that’s gone very wrong, and it’s even more powerful because the story at the center of the book is her own. Politics, science, history—it’s all in there, along with concrete advice for fellow sufferers. Policymakers can learn from this book, and patients can, too.”

—**JONATHAN COHN**, author of *Sick: The Untold Story of America’s Health Care Crisis—and the People Who Pay the Price*

Over 77 million people in the United States experience back pain each year. For some, the pain is present day and night, but for others, it shows up the moment a suitcase comes out of the closet, or whenever the relatives come to stay. All in, back trouble costs the United States about one hundred billion dollars a year, more than the cost of treating cancer, coronary artery disease, and AIDS combined. This prevalent woe exists in a political, psychological, social and economic context that greatly influences how patients will be treated—and if they’ll recover.

Journalist and author **Cathryn Jakobson Ramin**, whose *New York Times* bestseller *Carved in Sand: When Attention Fails and Memory Fades in Midlife* was published in 2007, spent years and a small fortune in her effort to resolve her own low back pain. When nothing worked, she decided to take an investigative look at the reality of spine medicine. Expensive, ineffective, sometimes illegal and often harmful, she found that the back pain industry exemplified the worst aspects of the U.S. health care system. The result is Ramin’s ground-breaking new book, **CROOKED: Outwitting the Back Pain Industry and Getting on the Road to Recovery** (Harper, \$27.99/\$34.99 Can., Hardcover; ISBN

13: 9780062641786; on-sale: May 9, 2017), which explains, in a lively, engaging and often shocking way, *what works, what doesn't, and why*.

A journalist for nearly four decades, Ramin backs up everything she says with meticulously sourced and checked facts. She traveled around the globe in her quest for answers, and dug deep into the medical literature. She interviewed hundreds of patients, and spent many hours with orthopedic spine surgeons, neurosurgeons, interventional pain management physicians, pain medicine doctors, physical medicine and rehabilitation specialists, physical therapists, chiropractors, exercise scientists, Iyengar yoga instructors, Feldenkrais Method and Alexander Technique teachers, Rolfing Structural Integration practitioners, and Tai Chi and Qi Gong experts. She observed surgeons in the OR, and spent days in intensive rehabilitation clinics. She watched as people whose cases were previously deemed hopeless found the will to recover. She also made herself a guinea pig: dressed in gym clothes, or, when necessary, stripped to her underwear for evaluation, she explored techniques that had brought reliable relief to many people.

CROOKED is a remarkable and engaging hybrid of investigative journalism and personal experience, which Ms. Ramin relates with plenty of self-deprecating wit. Readers should know that if their back pain has brought them to their knees, they are not alone. **CROOKED** will be a boon for anyone who is trying to navigate the complexities of the back pain industry. Patients, their colleagues, employers and those who care for them will benefit. Healthcare practitioners will find desperately needed answers. Readers with an interest in public health issues, medical economics, occupational medicine and administrative law will find **CROOKED** fascinating. For more on Ramin, visit: <http://cathrynjakobsonramin.com/>

ABOUT CATHRYN JAKOBSON RAMIN:

Cathryn Jakobson Ramin is an investigative journalist and the author of two books, both published by HarperCollins. The first, *Carved in Sand: When Attention Fails and Memory Fades in Midlife*, was a *New York Times* bestseller in 2007. *Crooked: Outwitting the Back Pain Industry and Getting on the Road to Recovery*, will be published on May 9, 2017.

For almost four decades, Ms. Ramin's long-form journalism has appeared in major magazines, including the *New York Times Magazine*, *More, O, New York* and [newyorker.com](http://www.newyorker.com). In addition, she is an essayist, and an accomplished public speaker. Married to Ron Ramin, a composer, they are the parents of two adult sons, Avery and Oliver. She has a B.A. from Tufts University, a background in theater, and is a member of the [Association of Health Care Journalists](#), [the National Association of Science Writers](#), [the Journalism and Women's Symposium](#) and [IRE](#), Investigative Reporters and Editors. She's a fellow of [The MacDowell Colony](#), as well as [The Virginia Center for the Creative Arts](#).

Ms. Ramin divides her time between Northern California and New York City. She's traveled around the world, most recently to India, and enjoys hiking, biking, swimming, painting, reading psychological thrillers and literary fiction, and taking in great theater, top-notch television, museums and jazz. Her current project: a psychological thriller of her own.

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By Cathryn Jakobson Ramin

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