Phantom Billing, Fake Prescriptions, and the High Cost of Medicine

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Phantom Billing, Fake Prescriptions, and the High Cost of Medicine: Health Care Fraud and What to Do about It.

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Preface

The health care systems in developed countries today employ diagnostic methods and treatment regimes that are light years ahead of the health care available when even the youngest readers of this book were born. Medical conditions once considered incurable or life threatening are now treated routinely, causing only minor disruptions to the patient’s life. Bioengineering and health care in the early part of the twenty-first century seemingly border on the miraculous.

But a dark side also exists. Fraud and abuse are pervasive elements of the vast health care systems of advanced industrial nations such as the United States and the European Union. A small but troublesome minority of health care providers submit bills for services they have never performed. Others provide treatments that their patients do not need, and they steal hundreds of millions of dollars from the Medicare and Medicaid programs through false billings. Still others take kickbacks from pharmaceutical manufacturers, hospitals, and ambulance companies. To make a quick buck, a few of the most nefarious health care “professionals” are willing to place the welfare or even the lives of their patients in jeopardy.

Health care is what criminologists call a “criminogenic industry.” This book illustrates how the U.S. health care system provides a fertile environment for fraud and abuse on a scale that makes it among the most serious of all white-collar crimes.