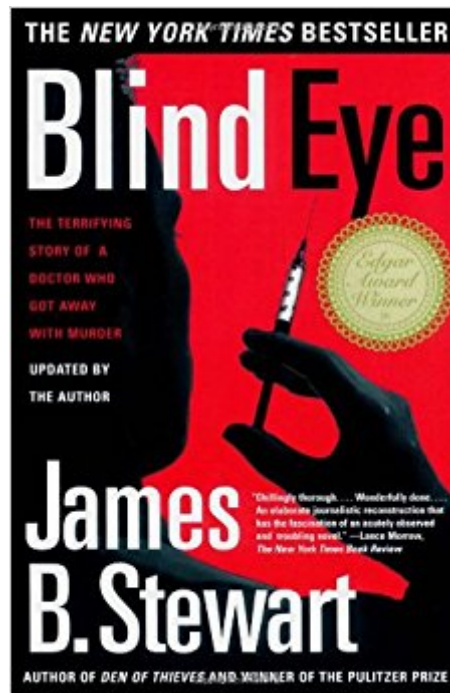


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# Blind Eye: The Terrifying Story Of A Doctor Who Got Away With Murder



## Synopsis

A medical thriller from Pulitzer Prize-winning author James B. Stewart about serial killer doctor Michael Swango and the medical community that chose to turn a blind eye on his criminal activities. No one could believe that the handsome young doctor might be a serial killer. Wherever he was hired—in Ohio, Illinois, New York, South Dakota—Michael Swango at first seemed the model physician. Then his patients began dying under suspicious circumstances. At once a gripping read and a hard-hitting look at the inner workings of the American medical system, *Blind Eye* describes a professional hierarchy where doctors repeatedly accept the word of fellow physicians over that of nurses, hospital employees, and patients—even as horrible truths begin to emerge. With the prodigious investigative reporting that has defined his Pulitzer Prize-winning career, James B. Stewart has tracked down survivors, relatives of victims, and shaken coworkers to unearth the evidence that may finally lead to Swango's conviction. Combining meticulous research with spellbinding prose, Stewart has written a shocking chronicle of a psychopathic doctor and of the medical establishment that chose to turn a blind eye on his criminal activities.

## Book Information

Paperback: 336 pages

Publisher: Simon & Schuster; 1 edition (June 15, 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0684865637

ISBN-13: 978-0684865638

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.9 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 176 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #59,858 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #60 in Books > Medical Books > Medicine > Medical Ethics #114 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > True Crime > Serial Killers #259 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > True Crime > Murder & Mayhem

## Customer Reviews

From the moment he entered medical school in the late 1970s, people around Michael Swango thought he was a little odd. But even though he expounded upon his obsessions with violent death and serial killings to anybody within earshot, almost nobody connected him to the string of deaths among patients under his care. When an investigation finally took place at the Ohio State medical

center, hospital administrators sympathized with Swango--against the direct testimony of patients and nurses--and seemed more concerned with how revelations of a murderous doctor might affect their public image than with the safety of their clients. And, remarkably, even after being released from prison in Illinois, where he had been convicted of (nonfatally) poisoning several of his coworkers, Swango was able to obtain positions at hospitals in South Dakota and New York. When American authorities finally started to pursue his case, he fled the country and began plying his trade in Zimbabwe. In June 1998, after being captured during an attempt to reenter the United States, he was sentenced to 42 months in federal prison--on fraud charges related to his employment in New York. The truly frightening aspect of *Blind Eye* is not the relentless chain of murders, but the ease with which Swango was able to repeatedly slip through the cracks in the medical system, simply by lying about the nature of his felony conviction. James B. Stewart methodically traces every step of Swango's career, laying out a straightforward narrative with all the suspense of a well-crafted thriller. Although attempts to "explain" Swango's behavior through psychopathology and a historical rise in the incidences of serial killing derail the ending somewhat, *Blind Eye* is still a must-read for true crime buffs--or anyone who enjoys good journalism. --Ron Hogan --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

In a harrowing and exhaustively researched account of neglect by the medical profession, a Pulitzer Prize-winning editor and author (*Den of Thieves*) presents convincing evidence that alleged serial killer Michael Swango injected a minimum of 35 patients with various toxic substances during the 15 years he was a medical student at Southern Illinois University, an intern at Ohio State University Medical Center and a physician at various hospitals in the U.S. and in Africa. In addition, the author makes a strong case that Swango, who has been described by many as charismatic, was responsible for the severe digestive upsets that plagued his colleagues and friends due to poisoned food and drink. Since Swango has never been evaluated by a psychologist, Stewart relies on the work of medical researchers who view serial killers as psychopathic narcissists. The major strength of Stewart's study, however, rests on his exposé of poor medical monitoring practices. For example, when female nursing personnel linked mysterious patient deaths to Swango's injections, male physicians dismissed their suspicions. Swango was finally sent to prison in 1985 after being convicted of poisoning his co-workers while he was employed as a paramedic. After his release, he found work at other teaching hospitals because they were not required to check with the national practitioners' data bank, a self-monitoring mechanism endorsed by the AMA that Stewart considers inadequate. Currently serving time in prison on fraud charges, Swango faces an FBI investigation

for murder. Agent, Amanda Urban; 9-city author tour; TV satellite tour. (Sept.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

I was very interested in this book as I knew Kristin Kinney, the lovely nurse who committed suicide (although I consider it murder by Dr. Swango as he was poisoning her with arsenic). She was a bright light; she lit up an entire room and it still makes me sick that she got into a relationship with this psychopath. However, apart from personal reasons, this book is fascinating, well written and clear. Many times it points out how the medical establishment could and should have checked more thoroughly, how more than one agency failed to pass information on to the next hospital regarding the serious suspicions about Dr. Swango. Also, there is an incident where two lucid geriatric female patients and another person (student nurse or volunteer) were all in the room when Dr. Swango administered a paralytic drug to one of the patients via injection. They all reported this, but the word of a "doctor" (the accused, at that) is believed over three witnesses. I'm sure there are weak links in many, if not most, professions. The medical profession seems like a really good place to start cleaning house. No one knows how many patients this doctor killed. He also poisoned and sickened people (naturally, without their knowledge) and "interviewed" them about their symptoms. This man is a psychopath and it's a crime that he wasn't stopped sooner. Maybe it's been done, but I think a thorough review of all his job hires, etc. ought to be done to ferret out why things went so wrong and to prevent future cases like this. In case anyone reading this book thinks it is fictitious or exaggerated, I can assure you it is not.

This book chronicles the life of Michael Swango from his childhood until the present. Swango, later to become Dr. Swango is raised in a home without a father. His father, a military man, prefers duty in Viet Nam than opportunity to stay at home. His mother, though doting upon Swango, is not one to express emotional warmth. Oddly she seems to pay undue attention to his achievements, leading him emotionally starved but unduly attached to his outward achievements. Swango is at least outwardly, the All American success story. Good looking, he is a gifted student and sent to a private school, while his brothers are left to attend public schools. He later enters Medical School. But Swango is left emotionally scarred. He has a compulsive need to be in "control". Unlike a would-be cop or would-be business executive, Swango finds the ultimate control as a physician - perfectly in position to be in control of people's lives. The ultimate control is over life and death for Swango. By using poisons and various medications, he controls the fate of his victims by deciding who will live or die by unknowingly receiving intravenous doses of well, God knows what. But Dr. Swango for all

outward appearances, is a shining success story, easily making a good impression on those who meet him, but not in a position to truly know him. He finishes medical school and secures a prestigious residency. Problems with Swango become evident early on. But such signs went largely unnoticed. That is to the powers that be. His peers couldn't help but see his peculiar preferences to be involved in life and death situations. As medical student he earns the nick name "Double O" Swango. Patients seem to mysteriously die shortly after contact with Swango. As evidence mounts that there is something desperately wrong with Dr. Swango, his supervising physicians discount the reports of his odd behavior by nursing students and patients. One of the most striking aspects of his story is the reaction of the faculty of the prestigious universities he works in. Being more concerned for their own reputations and legal liability they fail to take action that ensures the safety of the people they are supposed to serve. That perhaps the theme of the book: the medical community's reaction is naive at best and recklessly irresponsible at worst. But take into consideration the fact that Swango is the only known physician serial killer known in the past 100 or more years. Was the medical community prepared to see what is a rare occurrence in history? Perhaps the larger issue is just how well does the medical community police itself? Are they equipped to do it and prepared to take action when they need to? The book leaves these as questions to be answered by the reader though the author seems justifiably outraged.

James B Stewart is a terrific author; this book reads like an extended Wall St Journal investigative article. His painstakingly-detailed chronicle of Dr. Michael Swango - a true psychopath - is gripping and increasingly horrifying. My only editorial comment is while Stewart rightly assails the medical profession for its failure to protect the public, Stewart might have explored a bit more the fear of legal LIABILITY as a root cause. The book's focus on Doctors' hubris and hospitals' reflexive "circle the wagons" responses to allegations against one of their own gives short-shrift to the fact medical professionals are dedicated to curing diseases and saving lives. Certainly, the ongoing malpractice liability crisis in this country leads the medical establishment into inefficient, unnecessary and - in this case - counter-productive and dangerous behavior. Swango would never have gotten as far as he did without the ironic help of the legal system directly (defendants' rights over society's) and indirectly (threat of liability preventing doctors from admitting mistakes of judgment) shielding his criminal activity. I would enjoy seeing Stewart take apart a lawyer/law firm in this way.

In depth explanation of how incompetent, self-serving individuals in medical profession can escape prosecution and continue to practice.

Couldn't put this book down. I stayed up all night finishing this book. More please.

Amazing but scary you will want to read a sweet book during or after you read this book because it causes one to become mad real mad and you want to scream at medical high officials that run our medical schools.

It is hard to believe the medical profession would allow this to happen.

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