

NPR Pharmaceutical Propaganda Disguised as 'Journalism'

Analysis by [Dr. Joseph Mercola](#)

✓ Fact Checked

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › NPR published a hit piece about Mercola.com and other vaccine safety advocates designed to disparage and discredit those who are speaking out against COVID propaganda
- › The line of questioning sent to Mercola.com for comment was not journalism, but rather aimed at spreading pharmaceutical propaganda
- › NPR has received \$17.5 million in donations from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which were intended to target coverage of global health and education
- › Digital dictatorship is escalating, and people are increasingly being conditioned to think it's not only necessary for "misinformation" to be removed but that it's the obligation of these essential "information" carriers to do so

May 6, 2021, we received an email from Geoff Brumfiel, a senior editor and correspondent with NPR. According to NPR, "his reporting focuses on the intersection of science and national security,"¹ but as soon as I read the subject line of the email – "The business of anti-vaccine propaganda" [sic] – it was clear that the line of questioning that would follow was not journalism but rather a PR piece for the pharmaceutical industry.

Indeed, Brumfiel's email did not disappoint, nor did his resulting article, "For Some Anti-Vaccine Advocates, Misinformation Is Part of a Business."² True to form for NPR, the

article presents a slanted view of vaccine safety advocates designed to disparage and discredit those who are speaking out against COVID propaganda.

Conveniently, Brumfiel included only one short segment from our emailed response to his questions, but neglected to mention NPR's tight connections with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation — and the hundreds of articles NPR has released that are highly favorable toward the Gates Foundation and the work it funds.³

Brumfiel's Slanderous Allegations

Brumfiel included only a short segment of our email exchange in his NPR article, which was that I reject his "biased accusation of promoting misinformation."⁴ This is true, but it helps to read it in context. The entire sentence was actually, "Dr. Mercola rejects your biased accusation of promoting misinformation, please provide your direct evidence to support your slanderous allegations." Those allegations were made in Brumfiel's email to us, which read:

"I'm a reporter with National Public Radio who's working on a story about the business side of the antivaccine industry. The article describes how the current pandemic has provided an opportunity for people such as Dr. Mercola. By promoting misinformation about the coronavirus and vaccines, they are able to expand their reach and potentially their customer base."

Yet, NPR's smear piece shows what a real misinformation campaign looks like. A true journalist would not ask loaded questions with no relevance to his stated topic and no explanation as to how those questions might fit into his topic the way Brumfiel did. Those questions were:

- "1. Can you provide me with any details about the size of Dr. Mercola's businesses? And have they grown during the pandemic?*
- 2. How does he respond to critics who say that he is using misinformation about vaccines to turn people away from conventional medicine and towards his brands and products?*

3. *Is he worried about being deplatformed by social media companies? Would that pose a financial challenge to him?"*

Since Brumfiel did not include our response in his article, here it is for you to read in its entirety:

"Dr. Mercola owns a small business that employs 135 people in Cape Coral, FL. The pharmaceutical industry and the propagandists that fund your organization with multi-millions are making tens of billions of dollars through this pandemic – with complete indemnification.⁵

NPR serves an important role in pushing the pharmaceutical agenda to promote mandatory vaccination with the help of Bill Gates' funding. You are defending the world's most powerful and corrupt industry, while attacking a small business that has been fighting against them and claiming concerns about the size and growth of Dr. Mercola's business.

The pharmaceutical industry is the world's most powerful industry, and Bill Gates is one of the world's most powerful people.^{6,7,8} Standing up for what is right and defending free speech is more important than complying with any mass media campaign attacks or social media's political agendas. Your line of questioning is not journalism, it's just part of political bias and pharmaceutical propaganda."

Gates Foundation Gave \$17.5 Million to NPR

Mainstream media is increasingly being bought off by organizations including the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#), and as a result, the bought-and-paid-for press will only publish articles in their favor.

Writing in *Columbia Journalism Review*, Tim Schwab examined the recipients of nearly 20,000 Gates Foundation grants, finding more than \$250 million had been given to major media companies, including BBC, NBC, Al Jazeera, ProPublica, National Journal, The Guardian and the Center for Investigative Reporting.⁹

Ironically, “The foundation even helped fund a 2016 report¹⁰ from the American Press Institute that was used to develop guidelines¹¹ on how newsrooms can maintain editorial independence from philanthropic funders,” Schwab writes, adding, “Gates’s generosity appears to have helped foster an increasingly friendly media environment for the world’s most visible charity.”

And Gates’ donations come with strings attached. Those given to NPR were intended to target coverage of global health and education:¹²

“When Gates gives money to newsrooms, it restricts how the money is used — often for topics, like global health and education, on which the foundation works — which can help elevate its agenda in the news media.

For example, in 2015 Gates gave \$383,000 to the Poynter Institute, a widely-cited authority on journalism ethics ... earmarking the funds ‘to improve the accuracy in worldwide media of claims related to global health and development.’ Poynter senior vice president Kelly McBride said Gates’s money was passed on to media fact-checking sites ...

Since 2000, the Gates Foundation has given NPR \$17.5 million through 10 charitable grants — all of them earmarked for coverage of global health and education, specific issues on which Gates works ...

Even when NPR publishes critical reporting on Gates, it can feel scripted. In February 2018, NPR ran a story headlined ‘Bill Gates Addresses ‘Tough Questions’ on Poverty and Power.’ The ‘tough questions’ NPR posed in this Q&A were mostly based on a list curated by Gates himself, which he previously answered in a letter posted to his foundation’s website.”

NPR’s Key Source Is a Digital Hate Group

Brumfiel’s primary reference for his NPR hit piece is none other than Imran Ahmed, who runs the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH) — a progressive U.K.-based cancel-

culture leader¹³ with extensive ties to government and global think tanks who has labeled people questioning the COVID-19 vaccine as “threats to national security.”

Ahmed has gone on record saying he considers anti-vaxxers “an extremist group that pose a national security risk,”¹⁴ and admits tracking and spying on 425 vaccine-related Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter accounts.¹⁵ CCDH is also partnered with HealthGuard, which is NewsGuard’s health-related service.¹⁶

NewsGuard, the self-ascribed arbiter of the trustworthiness of internet websites, is another threat to the free sharing of information. It claims to rate information as reliable or fake news, supplying you with a color-coded rating system next to Google and Bing searches, as well as on articles displayed on social media.

But NewsGuard is in itself fraught with conflicts of interest, as it’s **largely funded by Publicis**, a global communications giant that’s partnered with Big Pharma. NewsGuard previously **classified Mercola.com as fake news** because we reported the SARS-CoV-2 virus as potentially having been leaked from the **biosafety level 4 (BSL4) laboratory** in Wuhan City, China, the epicenter of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Since then, several members of the U.S. Congress have vowed to **launch their own investigation** to explore the lab accident theory.¹⁷

Publicis appears to be playing an important role in the global censorship of information relating to COVID-19, and Publicis Health admitted its involvement in this agenda in an April 2021 tweet, in which they announced its partnership with NewsGuard, “to fight the ‘infodemic’ of misinformation about COVID-19 and its vaccines.”¹⁸

Publicis Health is dedicated to suppressing any information that hurts its Big Pharma clients, which include Lilly, Abbot, Roche, Amgen, Genentech, Celgene, Gilead, Biogen, AstraZeneca, Sanofi, GlaxoSmithKline and Bayer, just to name a few. They’re now being sued by the Massachusetts attorney general for their role in creating Purdue’s deceptive marketing for OxyContin, which is described as the “**crime of the century**.”

NPR Spreads CCDH’s Hit List

The CCDH published a [hit-list of 12 groups and individuals it wants Big Tech to bury, deplatform and ban](#) for disseminating COVID-19 information that runs counter to status quo propaganda. NPR jumped right on the bandwagon in spreading this misinformation, with an article titled, “Just 12 People Are Behind Most Vaccine Hoaxes on Social Media, Research Shows.”¹⁹

Not surprisingly, Mercola.com is on that list, and a ramp-up of personal threats that cannot be defended against in a court of law recently forced me to delete many of the articles discussing alternative treatments for COVID-19 from my website. That article — ironically part of NPR’s special series on “untangling disinformation” — is in itself fraught with misinformation, most of it again being spread by one individual — Ahmed — and CCDH.

NPR praises Facebook for blatant censorship, with statements such as, “Facebook said it now limits the reach of posts that could discourage people from getting vaccinated, even if the messages don’t explicitly break its rules. But the cat-and-mouse game continues.”²⁰ Then if you scroll to the bottom, you’ll see the editor’s note: “Facebook is among NPR’s financial supporters.”²¹

Media Is Getting Away With Blatant Lies

Digital dictatorship is escalating, and people are increasingly being conditioned to think it’s not only necessary for “misinformation” to be removed but that it’s the obligation of these essential information carriers to do so. Mercola.com is on the hit list and, as I already said, a ramp-up of personal threats that cannot be defended against in a court of law recently forced me to delete many of the articles discussing alternative treatments for COVID-19 from my website.

Censorship extremists have called this a victory, but it’s nothing of the sort. For instance, Coda Story published a false article May 7, 2021, claiming that “pressure from lawmakers and antidiscrimination groups” prompted me to remove COVID-19 content from Mercola.com, in order to “avoid social media ban.”²²

The article quotes Ahmed (notice a pattern?) who states, “Joseph Mercola is a superspreader of anti-vaccine and COVID disinformation. The fact that he has said he will self-censor shows the impact of penalizing anti-vaccine propagandists.”²³

I actually [stopped maintaining an active Facebook page](#) voluntarily in August 2019 due to the company’s habit of subverting users’ privacy. The idea that I am now self-censoring due to some form of unnamed penalty or to “avoid social media ban” is quite a stretch, and makes it clear that Ahmed did not read the article I published explaining [my reasoning for removing select content](#).

It was also implied that I’m part of an “anti-science movement” — another lie that’s easily “fact-checked,” considering one of the driving forces behind Mercola.com is to share science-backed health information — including the [science that not everyone wants you to hear](#).

It’s time to get the word out that if you want to see what a real misinformation campaign looks like, you need look no further than the mainstream media and social media, which are actively trying to restrict your access to the truth from websites like mine.

Sources and References

- ¹ [NPR, Geoff Brumfiel](#)
- ^{2, 4} [NPR May 12, 2021](#)
- ^{3, 9, 12} [Columbia Journalism Review August 21, 2020](#)
- ⁵ [Stat News February 23, 2021](#)
- ⁶ [OpenSecrets.org, Industry Profile: Pharmaceuticals/Health Products](#)
- ⁷ [JAMA. 2019;321\(1\):80-96. doi:10.1001/jama.2018.19320](#)
- ⁸ [BMJ 2021;372:n556](#)
- ¹⁰ [American Press Institute April 20, 2016 \(PDF\)](#)
- ¹¹ [American Press Institute January 12, 2017](#)
- ¹³ [Off-Guardian August 11, 2020](#)
- ¹⁴ [The Independent July 7, 2020](#)
- ¹⁵ [The Anti-Vaxx Playbook \(PDF\), Page 9](#)
- ¹⁶ [NewsGuard HealthGuard](#)
- ¹⁷ [Washington Post May 6, 2021](#)
- ¹⁸ [Twitter Publicis Health Media April 27, 2021](#)
- ^{19, 20, 21} [NPR May 14, 2021](#)
- ^{22, 23} [Coda Story May 7, 2021](#)

