

# How to Mislead People About Misinformation

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## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Dr. Sam Bailey of Christchurch, New Zealand, was a well-known presenter in a TVNZ health series called “The Checkup” until she was terminated for “spreading misinformation”
- › Bailey was able to track down what led to her being fired – someone with a background in social work reported her for spreading “misinformation” about positive reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) tests for COVID-19
- › The complaint itself included inaccuracies that suggested the person did not understand the science and neglected to include any references to back up the “misinformation” allegation
- › It was a case of someone parroting what they’ve been told, without analyzing the real information, and trying to suppress a viewpoint that threatened their own worldview
- › It’s a wheel of misinformation in which official agencies are calling for misinformation to be reported and spinning its threat to the public, but no one actually defines what this misinformation is and those who go against the narrative are being targeted
- › Bailey notes, “... Be very suspicious when you hear the term COVID misinformation because none of the institutions actively promoting the term can define it and don’t seem too keen to engage in discussions about it”

**Dr. Sam Bailey of Christchurch, New Zealand was a well-known presenter in a TVNZ health series called “The Checkup.” That is, until she was terminated for “spreading**

misinformation.” That word – misinformation – has been thrown around indiscriminately since the start of the pandemic, but what does it really mean? What qualifies as misinformation and who is in charge of dictating what’s misinformation and what’s not?

We’re at the convoluted point where a medical doctor can give an opinion and have it labeled “misinformation,” but how can an opinion be “wrong”? The livelihoods and reputations of countless people have been decimated based on “misinformation” while we still don’t have answers to these questions.

## **What Exactly Is the Meaning of Misinformation?**

Bailey cites the Cambridge Dictionary’s definition of misinformation, which is “wrong information, or the fact that people are misinformed.”<sup>1</sup> This implies that there are either incorrect statements or the person is trying to deceive others. Governments, and the corporations associated with them, are the ones most often using the term misinformation, but Bailey notes:<sup>2</sup>

*“... We know from history that governments, and their associated corporations, are specialists at gaslighting not only foreign countries but also their own citizens to do all sorts of crazy things. However now they expect us to believe that whistleblowers and individuals risking their careers are the ones behind the misinformation.”*

People are being censored, deplatformed and banned from social media for the crime of spreading “misinformation”, the meaning of which can change from day to day and from platform to platform.

It’s a modern-day witch hunt, whereby the U.S. Department of Homeland Security even lists promulgating “false narratives” around COVID-19 as a top national security threat, which basically puts a “domestic terrorist” target on the backs of those of us who have been identified as the most prolific “superspreaders” of COVID-19 misinformation, whatever that “misinformation” happens to be.

In the U.S., dark money group the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH) has accused 12 individuals, me included, for being responsible for spreading the majority of this misinformation,<sup>3</sup> but even Facebook pointed out the absurdity of such a claim. In an August 18, 2021, Facebook report, Monika Bickert, vice president of Facebook content policy, set the record straight, and in the process, demolished CCDH's claims:<sup>4</sup>

*"In recent weeks, there has been a debate about whether the global problem of COVID-19 vaccine misinformation can be solved simply by removing 12 people from social media platforms. People who have advanced this narrative contend that these 12 people are responsible for 73% of online vaccine misinformation on Facebook. There isn't any evidence to support this claim ...*

*In fact, these 12 people are responsible for about just 0.05% of all views of vaccine-related content on Facebook. This includes all vaccine-related posts they've shared, whether true or false, as well as URLs associated with these people."*

## **Directing Millions to Fight an Undefined 'Problem'**

Similar occurrences are happening worldwide, including in New Zealand, where Bailey explained:<sup>5</sup>

*"Here in New Zealand we have government funded departments and state-sponsored media that claim to be responsible for collecting, monitoring and educating on COVID-19 misinformation. But when you try and pin them down on backing up the allegations of misinformation, it seems they all pass the buck and none of them can give you specific examples."*

To get to the bottom of it, Dr. Anna Goodwin, a retired oncologist, put in an inquiry with the Health Research Council of New Zealand to find out about their allegations of misinformation.

She pointed out that New Zealand health minister Andrew Little appropriated \$42 million to fund 36 projects directed at reducing misinformation and "vaccine hesitancy." She

asked, “What is the definition of ‘COVID-19 misinformation’ for the purposes of the allotment of funding to address this problem?”<sup>6</sup> Their response?

“The Health Research Council has not referred to ‘COVID-19 misinformation’ and none of the funded projects used this term, hence we do not have a definition for it.”<sup>7</sup> New Zealand’s Unite Against COVID-19 website<sup>8</sup> also neglects to define misinformation, though they do suggest that you could discuss it with your doctor – except, health care providers can also lose their licenses if they don’t universally support the COVID-19 narrative and share “anti-vaccination messages.”

At New Zealand Doctors’ SOS, or NZDSOS, more than 38,000 health care professionals have signed a declaration reminding authorities of the Nuremburg code and that COVID-19 injections must be voluntary and not forcibly administered.<sup>9</sup>

## **The Government Is the One With the Agenda**

Bailey points out the irony of New Zealand’s government website including a section on “How to Spot Misinformation.” It includes thinking about “what the author wants you to believe,” a strategy of trying to discredit someone without actually evaluating the information they’re sharing.

“It gaslights the public because the government is the one with the agenda. They want you to believe something and follow their policies, which are increasingly relying on coercion, because people don’t want to go along with their nonsense,” she says.<sup>10</sup>

They go on to suggest looking for “reliable sources” such as “academics or the mainstream media,” but they’re not talking about the academics who are increasingly questioning what’s going on. Further, the mainstream media rely on advertising revenue and government handouts to survive – they’re not going to bite the hands that feed them.

Michael Bassett, Ph.D., a New Zealand political historian, commented that “the government is trying to keep the media on side by overpaying them for printing the

masses of COVID announcements ... if my information is correct, it is corruption, pure and simple. In normal circumstances there would be rebellion.”<sup>11</sup>

The New Zealand government website also encourages residents to spy and tattle on those spreading “misinformation” by immediately notifying authorities via CERT NZ, the country’s official outlet for responding to cyber security threats, while at the same time making contradictory statements like, “Every New Zealander has the right to freedom of speech. Challenging misinformation is a way to ensure New Zealanders have access to the facts.”<sup>12</sup>

Bailey notes, “This is like something out of “1984.” They are encouraging you to do [tattle] on others under the guise of freedom of speech so that other people’s freedom of speech can be regulated.”<sup>13</sup>

## **More Spin About ‘Misinformation’**

What criteria does CERT NZ use to determine whether the reports of misinformation they’re actively soliciting from the public are credible and, in fact, misinformation? Rob Pope, CERT NZ director, said:<sup>14</sup>

*“Members of the public report potential misinformation and disinformation ... Other agencies with relevant subject matter expertise can determine its accuracy i.e. for COVID-19 the Ministry of Health.”*

It’s a wheel of misinformation, in which all of the agencies are calling for misinformation to be reported and spinning its threat to the public, but no one actually defines what this misinformation is.

Professor Cameron Stewart of the University of Sydney was interviewed by ABC News on the topic of regulating COVID-19 misinformation and social media influencers,<sup>15</sup> and he went so far as to imply that only certain government-funded academics should be discussing COVID-19 information – not those on social media. And he also neglected to define misinformation.

Bailey reached out to him for comment on his statements, and why he would support the centralized control of information by a select few — a sure set up for disaster — but he didn't respond.

## **Misinformation Gets Bailey Fired for Spreading Misinformation**

Bailey was able to track down what led to her being fired from her position as a presenter on "The Checkup." Someone with a background in social work reported her for spreading "misinformation" about positive reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) tests for COVID-19.

The PCR test is not designed to be used as a diagnostic tool as it cannot distinguish between inactive (noninfectious) viruses and "live" or reproductive ones.<sup>16</sup> She was able to track down the nature of the complaint, which itself included inaccuracies that suggested the person did not understand the science and neglected to include any references to back up the "misinformation" allegation.<sup>17</sup>

Nonetheless, the complaint made it to the executive team at TVNZ, and a conversation ensued between the company's general manager of corporate communications, Rachel Howard, and Vicki Keogh, TVNZ's commissioner of factual and unscripted comedy.

"These two ladies, who appear to have no medical or scientific background, then produced their own unscripted comedy," Bailey said, and were going to have a conversation with her about removing the "problematic" content, which she believes included her stating that she had no interest in receiving a COVID-19 jab.

The executives then discussed that there should be a "full audit of the YouTube channel," and that "removing this video is the minimum step, but there is still huge reputation risk to be giving platform to a doctor dabbling in COVID denial."<sup>18</sup> Shortly after, Bailey was asked to remove the video, but she said she stood behind all of her content.

It was a case of someone parroting what they've been told without analyzing the real information, and trying to suppress a viewpoint that threatened their own worldview.

When weeding through information in your own life, it's important to dig deep enough to unveil what's real, and what's real misinformation. As Bailey said:<sup>19</sup>

*"Looking back, I'm now happy that these people, in a way, helped show me the true path I needed to take. Public TV show executives and the audience cheering on their anti-science and contrived messaging was not something I can be a part of.*

*My own content is free from the artificial restraints and departing the TV show strengthened by resolve to leave no stone unturned when investigating science ... even if the findings go against the establishment and how I was trained.*

*... Misinformation is a word thrown around by those who are pushing a narrative. Real scientists produce their own work and don't cry 'misinformation' when someone says something they don't agree with.*

*At the end of the day, be very suspicious when you hear the term COVID misinformation because none of the institutions actively promoting the term can define it and don't seem too keen to engage in discussions about it. Perhaps with these things that have mysterious definitions, we can seek an explanation from an expert in the craft."*

## Sources and References

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- <sup>4</sup> Facebook August 18, 2021
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