

# Why FDA Warned Dr. Mercola to Stop Writing About Vitamin D

Analysis by [Dr. Joseph Mercola](#)

✓ Fact Checked

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › In the summer of 2020, the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) launched a social media campaign to put an end to Mercola.com. CSPI admitted they pressured the FDA to issue me a warning letter to stop writing about nutritional products that can lower your risk of respiratory infections such as COVID-19
- › CSPI is a consumer advocacy group bankrolled by billionaires and their corporate ties to Monsanto, the Gates Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Rockefeller Family Fund and Bloomberg Philanthropies
- › CSPI rails against published science demonstrating certain nutrients can boost your immune function and help lower your risk of severe infection, saying that science discourages mask wearing – which has no published scientific evidence to back its universal use
- › CSPI has a history of promoting industry science and propaganda, having supported artificial sweeteners, trans fats, GMOs, fake meat and the low-fat myth. They've also actively undermined transparency in labeling efforts
- › We have fully addressed the warning letter, and put the FDA on notice that it cannot stop speech it does not like

**This article was previously published March 15, 2021, and has been updated with new information.**

In the summer of 2020, the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) – a consumer advocacy group partnered with Bill Gates' agrichemical PR group, the Cornell Alliance for Science,<sup>1</sup> and bankrolled by billionaires with ties to Monsanto, the Gates Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Rockefeller Family Fund and Bloomberg Philanthropies<sup>2</sup> – launched a social media campaign to put an end to Mercola.com.

July 21, 2020, CSPI issued a press release<sup>3</sup> in which they accused me of falsely claiming "that at least 22 vitamins, supplements and other products available for sale on his web site can prevent, treat or cure COVID-19 infection." This despite the fact that their Appendix of Illegal Claims<sup>4</sup> clearly show no COVID-19-related claims exist on any of the product links.

The group also testified in a Senate hearing on the topic of COVID-19 scams and urged the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Federal Trade Commission to take regulatory action against me.

In an August 12, 2020, email, CSPI president Dr. Peter Lurie<sup>5</sup> – a former FDA associate commissioner<sup>6</sup> – made the spurious claim that I "profit from the COVID-19 pandemic" through "anti-vaccine fearmongering" and reporting of science-based nutrition shown to impact your disease risk.

## **Former FDA Official Pulls Strings to Target Natural Health**

Seeing how Lurie is a former FDA official, it was disheartening, but not surprising, that the FDA followed up by issuing us a warning letter<sup>7</sup> for "Unapproved and misbranded products related to COVID-19." Lurie has publicly taken credit for the FDA's action,<sup>8</sup> thereby establishing the potential that CSPI is pulling strings under the new administration through relationships they did not have back in August 2020 when they first launched their assault on my free speech.

According to the FDA, vitamin C, vitamin D3 and quercetin products are "unapproved new drugs sold in violation of section 505(a) of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act." Thereby, the agency also listed Mercola.com on its Fraudulent COVID-19 Products page.

Lurie also appeared to hint that he wants federal authorities to remove my [StopCOVIDCold](#) site, where you can download a free scientific report detailing the benefits of maintaining appropriate vitamin D levels to protect against viral infections. He also urged "state attorneys general to investigate how they may further protect consumers from Mercola's illegal marketing."<sup>9</sup>

*"Americans are justifiably concerned about becoming infected with the coronavirus and contracting COVID-19. Being misled to believe that supplements could prevent or treat COVID-19 could cause consumers to fail to take protective measures such as mask-wearing, putting themselves and others at risk, or fail to seek actual medical treatment if sick," Lurie wrote.*<sup>10</sup>

It's ironic that Lurie dismissed offhand peer-reviewed, published science demonstrating certain nutrients can boost your immune function and help lower your risk of severe infection – be it from SARS-CoV-2, the seasonal flu or anything else – and touted mask wearing, which has no published scientific evidence to back its universal use, as one of the most important prevention strategies against COVID-19.

Sadly, this is where we still are today. "Trust the science," they say, while simultaneously promoting scientifically unverified claims and trying to eradicate anyone who simply reports the findings that are actually published in the medical literature that may negatively impact the pharmaceutical industry.

## **CSPI and FDA Cannot Censor Speech**

The CSPI was trying to censor my efforts to educate people on how to avoid vitamin D deficiency which, without doubt, places them at far higher risk of complications and death from respiratory infections. Well, I did not capitulate at the time and I still am not going to stand by doing nothing while people die from COVID-19 and other respiratory infections due to vitamin D deficiency.

In October 2020, I co-wrote a paper together with William Grant, Ph.D.,<sup>11</sup> and Dr. Carol Wagner,<sup>12</sup> both of whom are on the GrassrootsHealth vitamin D expert panel. The paper

demonstrates the clear link between vitamin D deficiency and severe cases of COVID-19. This paper was published in the peer-reviewed medical journal *Nutrients*.<sup>13</sup>

With that, I have established my medical and scientific merit, and will continue to express my professional opinions, based on the available science, and defend my freedom of speech as the U.S. Constitution provides for.

The FDA's warning letter highlighted statements in articles on my website that are fully referenced and supported by published science. I remain committed to providing truthful information, for free, to anyone that wants it, and I'm all for having a rigorous scientific debate when necessary.

However, CSPI has taken credit for pressuring the FDA to issue this warning letter to suppress my free speech. The FDA's warning letter was simply another attempt by CSPI to smear me with false accusations.

**“ If scientists and researchers are publishing these studies, how can it be a crime to report their findings? At the end of the day, the CSPI's attacks on this website amounted to an effort to suppress science itself. ”**

As CSPI well knows, thanks to the U.S. constitution and the first amendment, I have every right to speak publicly on matters regarding health, so CSPI's accusations were nothing but another attempt to "cancel" me while concealing their own duplicity. For the record, we fully addressed the warning letter; the FDA cannot simply stop free speech that CSPI does not like.

## **This Is NOT the First Time CSPI Endangered Public Health**

CSPI continues to be a vitamin D denier even though overwhelming evidence points to its ability to reduce the risk of developing severe COVID-19. This isn't surprising, coming from a Rockefeller-funded organization that pushed deadly trans fats on the American

public until the facts became undeniable, at which point they simply rewrote the organization's history on this subject to hide its past stance.

In 1986, CSPI described trans fat as "a great boon to Americans' arteries."<sup>14</sup> Two years later, in 1988, they still praised trans fats,<sup>15</sup> saying "there is little good evidence that trans fats cause any more harm than other fats" and that "much of the anxiety over trans fats stems from their reputation as 'unnatural.'" Meanwhile, in the real world, the CSPI's highly successful trans fat campaign resulted in an epidemic of heart disease.

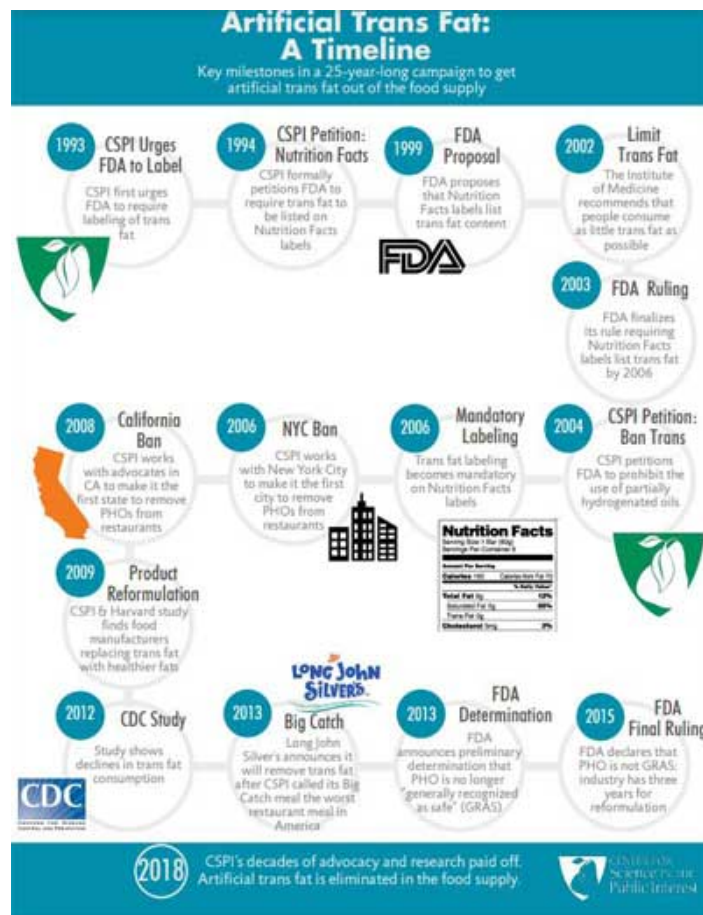
The CSPI's role in the promotion of trans fats and its influence on the food industry was discussed in David Schleifer's article, "The Perfect Solution: How Trans Fats Became the Healthy Replacement for Saturated Fats,"<sup>16</sup> in which he noted that:

*"Scholars routinely argue that corporations control US food production, with negative consequences for health ... However, the transition from saturated to trans fats shows how activists can be part of spurring corporations to change."*

It wasn't until the 1990s that CSPI started reversing its position on synthetic trans fats, but the damage had already been done, and it never admitted its error. In fact, rather than openly admitting it had misled the public with erroneous claims, CSPI simply deleted sections of its previous support of trans fat from the web.<sup>17</sup>

In the graphic below, notice how their historical timeline<sup>18</sup> of trans fat starts at 1993 — the year CSPI realized the jig was up and they had to support the elimination of trans fat.

CSPI then started raising money for campaigns to stop the heart disease-causing substance they first promoted. How diabolical is that? Create the problem and then take money from others for the solution.



This obfuscation was noted by Mary Enig, Ph.D., in a 2003 article, in which she wrote:<sup>19</sup>

*"On October 20, 1993, CSPI had the chutzpah to call a press conference in Washington, DC and lambast the major fast-food chains for doing what CSPI coerced them into doing, namely, using partially hydrogenated vegetable oils in their deep fat-fryers.*

*On that date, CSPI, an eager proponent of partially hydrogenated oils for many years, even when their adverse health effects were apparent, reversed its position after an onslaught of adverse medical reports linking trans fatty acids in these processed oils to coronary heart disease and cancer ...*

*Thanks to CSPI, healthy traditional fats have almost completely disappeared from the food supply, replaced by manufactured trans fats known to cause many diseases. By 1990, most fast food chains had switched to partially hydrogenated vegetable oil ...*

*Who benefits? Soy, or course ... [and] in CSPI's January, 1991 newsletter, Jacobson notes that 'our effort was ultimately joined ... by the American Soybean Association.'*"

Even more egregious is the CSPI's continued recommendation to eat unsaturated fats like soy and canola oils<sup>20</sup> and avoid butter and other healthy saturated fats, saying that "changing fats doesn't lower the risk of dying."<sup>21</sup>

This wholly disregards the compelling evidence showing that industrial vegetable oils, omega-6 linoleic acid in particular, pose significant health risks and contribute to chronic disease. And chronic disease, in turn, impacts mortality.

## **CSPI Primarily Protects Big Business**

This tendency to fall in line with industry science and propaganda has become a trend within CSPI. For example, it wasn't until 2013 that CSPI finally downgraded the artificial sweetener Splenda from its former "safe" category to one of "caution."<sup>22</sup>

In 2016, they downgraded it again, from "caution" to "avoid."<sup>23</sup> Despite that, CSPI continues to promote diet soda as a safer alternative to regular soda, saying it "does not promote diabetes, weight gain or heart disease in the way that full-calorie sodas do."<sup>24</sup>

The group has also taken a strong pro-GMO stand and actively undermined the GMO labeling movement,<sup>25</sup> which resulted in the U.S. being the only country in the world that does not have clear GMO labeling. In August 2001, the organization urged the FDA to take enforcement action against food companies using non-GMO labels, claiming such labels could "deceive consumers."<sup>26</sup>

In a similar vein, the group opposes clear labeling of ultraprocessed fake meat. In a May 2018 letter to the FDA,<sup>27</sup> CSPI urged the agency "to reject efforts by the United States Cattlemen's Association to prohibit use of the terms 'meat' or 'beef' on plant-based and cultured proteins marketed as alternatives to traditional meat." All in all, it appears the CSPI is completely against the idea of a well-informed public.

The CSPI has also been a promoter of the thoroughly debunked low-fat myth. In 1995, they launched a "1% or Less" campaign that urged everyone over the age of 2 to switch from whole and 2% milk to skim milk (also known as nonfat or fat-free milk) in order to reduce their saturated fat intake.<sup>28,29,30</sup>

It was another successful campaign that resulted in the doubling of skim milk sales.<sup>31</sup> However, just like their trans fat campaign, this was equally ill advised, seeing how research<sup>32,33</sup> shows full-fat dairy actually lowers your risk of death from diabetes and cardiovascular causes such as stroke.

## **CSPI Has Repeatedly Violated Its Mission Statement**

Considering the suspected, and in some cases well-verified, health hazards of trans fats, artificial sweeteners, soy, GMOs, low-fat diet and fake meat, CSPI's intent to protect and advance public health is questionable to say the least.

It seems they're more interested in protecting profitable industries, and the CSPI's efforts to destroy companies selling vitamins and supplements with natural antiviral effects<sup>34</sup> is simply more evidence of that.

The fact is, they sought to bring an end to Mercola.com because we were and still are such a serious threat to their agenda and they want to eliminate as many of the truth tellers as they can.

## **Sources and References**

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- <sup>2</sup> [Influence Watch CSPI](#)
- <sup>3</sup> [CSPI July 21, 2020](#)
- <sup>4</sup> [Illegal Claims Pertaining to Mercola Group Products \(PDF\)](#)
- <sup>5</sup> [CSPI July 19, 2017](#)
- <sup>6</sup> [CSPI.net.org Peter Lurie Bio](#)
- <sup>7</sup> [FDA.gov Mercola.com warning letter February 18, 2021](#)
- <sup>8, 9, 10</sup> [SCPI.net.org March 4, 2021](#)
- <sup>11</sup> [SUNARC.org William Grant Bio](#)
- <sup>12</sup> [MUSC Carol Wagner MD Bio](#)



- <sup>13</sup> [Nutrients 2020; 12\(11\): 3361](#)
- <sup>14</sup> [The Atlantic November 8, 2013](#)
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- <sup>16</sup> [Academia.edu, The Perfect Solution: How Trans Fats Became the Healthy Replacement for Saturated Fats](#)
- <sup>17, 19</sup> [Weston A Price January 6, 2003](#)
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- <sup>31</sup> [The 1% or Less Social Marketing Campaign \(PDF\), Effectiveness Page 2](#)
- <sup>32</sup> [The Lancet September 11, 2018; 392\(10161\): 2288-2297](#)
- <sup>33</sup> [American Journal of Clinical Nutrition July 11, 2018; 108\(3\): 476-484](#)
- <sup>34</sup> [CSPI.net.org June 4, 2020](#)