

# How Wikipedia Is Manipulating Your Health

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## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › While Wikipedia has become the world's most powerful thought leader – controlling a vast amount of internet information and being used to determine the credibility of experts across most fields – Wikipedia itself warns it is not a reliable source, as it can be edited by anyone at any time
- › Despite this blatant admission of unreliability, Wikipedia is the go-to site for Google quality raters to assess the expertise, authoritativeness and trustworthiness of an author or website
- › Despite Wikipedia's claims of neutrality, what they're putting on their site is some of the most biased information you'll find anywhere in media today
- › Scientists found 9 of 10 of the costliest medical conditions covered on Wikipedia contain assertions that are contradicted by peer-reviewed medical literature
- › A specialized Wikipedia project called Guerrilla Skepticism on Wikipedia recruits skeptics to edit pages and squash opposing views. In 2018, this project had at least 120 editors

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You may think Wikipedia – originally funded with revenue from soft-core pornography<sup>1</sup> – is the best thing since Cliff Notes, with quick and easy access to all the facts and news you ever needed to know. Some believe Wikipedia is even better than Encyclopedia Britannica; indeed, Wikipedia's founders intended it to be a replacement for it. But is Wikipedia really a trustworthy source?

## **Wikipedia Is Not a Reliable Source**

Interestingly enough, while Wikipedia has become the world's most powerful thought leader — controlling a vast amount of internet information and being used to determine the credibility of experts across most fields — Wikipedia itself warns it is NOT a reliable source. It states:<sup>2</sup>

*“Wikipedia is not a reliable source. Wikipedia can be edited by anyone at any time. This means that any information it contains at any particular time could be vandalism, a work in progress, or just plain wrong.*

*Biographies of living persons, subjects that happen to be in the news, and politically or culturally contentious topics are especially vulnerable to these issues. Edits on Wikipedia that are in error may eventually be fixed.*

*However, because Wikipedia is a volunteer run project, it cannot monitor every contribution all of the time. There are many errors that remain unnoticed for days, weeks, months, or even years. Therefore, Wikipedia should not be considered a definitive source in and of itself.”*

Despite this blatant admission of unreliability, Wikipedia is the go-to site for Google quality raters to assess the expertise, authoritativeness and trustworthiness of an author or website. There’s also evidence showing Wikipedia is edited by people with a very specific agenda, and anyone who tries to clarify or clear up inaccuracies on the site is simply blocked.

## **Wikipedia Is Ruled by Skeptics With Biased Agendas**

Investigative journalist Sharyl Attkisson, for example, has repeatedly tried to “correct provably false facts” about her background on Wikipedia, only to be told she’s not a reliable source and having her edits overridden by anonymous editors that guard her page, making sure her award-winning work is kept hushed and her character portrait tarnished.<sup>3</sup>

Anyone looking at Wikipedia to assess Attkisson's expertise as a journalist – without already being familiar with her stellar body of work – would walk away thinking she's an unreliable source, when in fact she's one of a very few impeccable truth-tellers of our time.

Other examples of “sanitizing” certain pages and tarnishing others can be found in a June 28, 2015 article<sup>4</sup> in The Epoch Times. As noted by Deepak Chopra in a 2013 article:<sup>5</sup>

*“Thanks to the Internet, skepticism can spread with the speed of light, carrying in its wake all forms of unfairness and bad faith. A distressing example has been occurring at Wikipedia, where a band of committed skeptics have focused their efforts to discredit anyone whom they judge an enemy ...*

*[S]keptics ... have become so skilled at thwarting anyone who disagrees with their point of view that a small swarm of skeptical editors is capable of outnumbering, bullying, and even banning all those who oppose them.”*

Similarly, British journalist and author Robert McLuhan, who covers consciousness, spirituality and psi research, had the following to say about Wikipedia in 2013:<sup>6</sup>

*“Recently I've been poking around on the site to see how psi topics are presented. My impression is that a novice would come away with a pretty jaundiced view. It's obvious that sceptics are busily re-editing articles in their favour, and a reader has kindly sent me a link that shows how they do this.*

*It's a project called Guerrilla Skepticism on Wikipedia,<sup>7</sup> run by Susan Gerbic, who recruits sceptics to give pages a makeover, both those that publicise their own side (ie debunkers, key sceptic figures, etc) and also the opposition's (celebrity psychics, paranormal claimants, etc).*

*This is a specialised activity and Gerbic's blog<sup>8</sup> gives tips and techniques. Recently she's gone global, getting sceptics to edit foreign language pages.”*

According to Wired, the Guerilla Skepticism on Wikipedia project had at least 120 editors as of 2018.<sup>9</sup> For an inside look at what many Wikipedia editors seeking more neutral coverage are up against, read this six-part series on The Weiler Psi blog.<sup>10</sup> To learn even more, check out Wikipediocracy<sup>11</sup> — an entire organization dedicated to exposing the many problems and hypocrisy of Wikipedia.

Even Lawrence (Larry) Sanger, who co-founded Wikipedia in 2001, bailed ship the very next year,<sup>12</sup> saying “trolls sort of took over” the site, that “The inmates started running the asylum,”<sup>13</sup> and that “In some fields and some topics, there are groups who ‘squat’ on articles and insist on making them reflect their own specific biases.”<sup>14,15</sup>

In 2012, evidence also emerged revealing a Wikipedia trustee and Wikipedian in Residence were being paid to edit pages on behalf of their clients and secure their placement on Wikipedia’s front page in the “Did You Know” section,<sup>16</sup> which publicizes new or expanded articles<sup>17</sup> — a clear violation of Wikipedia rules.

## **Study Conclusion: Wikipedia Wrong on 90% of Medical Advice**

If you ever use Wikipedia for health information, take heed, as this may be a costly and potentially dangerous tactic. An important May 27, 2014, article<sup>18,19</sup> in Time magazine addressed this, reporting on a study<sup>20,21</sup> looking into the veracity of medical claims made on Wikipedia. As reported by Time:

*“A team of U.S. scientists said they found ‘many errors’ in Wikipedia articles concerning the 10 costliest medical conditions. The researchers cross-checked Wikipedia entries on coronary disease, lung cancer, hypertension and back pain, among other ailments, against the latest research from peer-reviewed journals.*

*Nine out of 10 entries analyzed on the crowd-sourced encyclopedia contained assertions that were contradicted by the peer-reviewed sources ...*

*‘Health care professionals, trainees, and patients should use caution when using Wikipedia to answer questions regarding patient care,’ wrote the study’s authors ... The authors laid particular stress on medical professionals; a recent*

*study<sup>22,23</sup> found that 50 percent of physicians admitted using Wikipedia as a reference source.”*

## **Wikipedia Hates Holistic Medicine**

Meanwhile, the Guerilla Sceptics have deleted expert articles on homeopathy,<sup>24,25,26,27</sup> energy medicine and the [Emotional Freedom Techniques](#) (EFT), just to name a few, replacing them with entries that present these topics as various forms of “pseudoscience,” disregarding the peer-reviewed scientific evidence that supports them.

Even the president of the American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine reports he was prevented from posting positive information about antiaging derived from the academy’s own research.<sup>28</sup> One blatant example of how Wikipedia twists content with slanted and biased presentations is the entry for the founder of homeopathy, Dr. Samuel Hahnemann.<sup>29</sup>

Rather than simply describing Hahnemann as a physician best known for creating the system of alternative medicine called homeopathy, they attribute to him the creation of “the pseudoscientific” system (with a hyperlink to pseudoscientific) of homeopathy.

There’s nothing objective about this entry, and it’s quite clearly designed to manipulate public opinion about homeopathy, seeing how [research showing the efficacy of homeopathic medicines](#) has been published in several of the world’s most respected medical journals.

Overall, you’re not going to find out the truth about alternative medicine on Wikipedia — in large part due to the intense bias of its co-founder, Jimmy Wales, who is openly hostile against holistic medicine, and who in 2014 rejected and derided a Change.org petition to bring in more positive discussion of holistic medicine on Wikipedia.<sup>30,31,32</sup>

## **Understand How Wikipedia Operates and How It’s Being Used**

Truth be told, Wikipedia is dependent on your lack of knowledge about how they really operate – and the fact that they post a disclaimer stating readers should not trust everything they read on Wikipedia.

Taking advantage of your desire for a quick, let-them-do-the-work information search, their goal is to shuttle your thoughts, opinions and knowledge into a silo that doesn't allow anything in except what they put in there. And, despite their claims of neutrality, what they're putting on their site is some of the most biased information you'll find anywhere in media today.

Worse, they've partnered with Google so your searches will go straight to Wikipedia, or at the very least high on the Google search page. Wikipedia's cozy relationship with Google is not just curious (considering Google's quality raters are told to treat Wikipedia information as the gospel of truth); it's dangerous to free thought and free speech on the internet.

Case in point: Do a Google search<sup>33</sup> on Wikipedia and you will see that Google allows top placement for answers to questions about Wikipedia – such as: Is Wikipedia fake information? Does Wikipedia tell the truth? How reliable is Wikipedia? – created by Wikipedia itself. Talk about letting the fox not only guard, but run, the henhouse!

How are readers to know what's true and what's fake about Wikipedia when Wikipedia is its own fact-checker?<sup>34</sup> Perhaps a better question might be: Just how much does Google's \$2 million donation<sup>35</sup> to Wikipedia figure in to how Google answers questions about Wikipedia in its search engines?

Wikipedia also gets funding from the likes of George Soros, Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg – all individuals who are notorious for stamping out free speech, free thought and objective exchanges of information.

They've also gained the favor of institutions of higher learning that once banned Wikipedia as a source, but now promote them, and have chummied up with one of the oldest, most-respected news leaders in the U.S., the Poynter Institute, which I'll discuss in further detail below.

Now, instead of asking the questions behind the questions and doing their own original investigative journalism, the media is allowing these outside-funded entities – Wikipedia and [Snopes](#), along with so-called “fact-checkers” in the form of a group called The International Fact-Checking Network<sup>36</sup> – to do their jobs for them.

What’s particularly tragic is the fact that the Fourth Estate – the last bastion of a free world with real news – doesn’t even seem to realize the power they’ve handed over to anonymous agents with zero accountability.

## **Wikipedia as a Generator of News**

In recent years, it’s become clear Wikipedia is not just a simple repository of encyclopedic information but an actual generator of breaking news. A May 1, 2019, Newswise article<sup>37</sup> talks about this trend, saying that it looks like Wikipedia may be the “new” media, generating news (often in real time) but without the codes of ethics that conventional news sources have historically adhered to. As reported by Newswise:

*“Dr. Buntly Avieson from the University’s Department of Media and Communications has examined Wikipedia as a breaking news source, in a new research paper<sup>38</sup> published today in prestigious internet studies journal First Monday.*

*‘When a major global news event occurs, such as the Easter bombings in Sri Lanka or the Christchurch shootings, Wikipedia contributors from around the world come together in a virtual ‘newsroom’ to craft a narrative, followed closely by readers seeking the latest information,’ she said.*

*Her research found in any given month, the site’s most popular articles – both in number of views and number of edits – are those that report breaking news ... Avieson’s research also highlighted some of the consequences of using Wikipedia as a source of news:*

*‘Wikipedia contributors don’t undertake the core role of journalists, which is to produce new work. Contributors’ news gathering practices are solely*

*'aggregation and assemblage' ...*

*'Similarly, in terms of professionalism, contributors don't answer to journalism codes of ethics and the hierarchy that has formed is based on seniority and meritocracy, where editors gain administrative privileges according to the culture of Wikipedia. This raises some ethical concerns.'*"

In a twist of irony, Wikipedia uses real news to create “new” news. The problem with this is that Wikipedia also stands as a repository of all they believe is worthy of knowing, and any information that threatens their tunnel-visioned world is simply edited out.

## **Why You Should Never Rely on Wikipedia**

According to the book, “The Wikipedia Revolution,”<sup>39</sup> at its inception, co-founder Wales said Wikipedia’s only “nonnegotiable” policy would be its neutral point of view. Ideas and facts were to be presented “in such a fashion that both supporters and opponents can agree.”

Yet Wikipedia is far from neutral. Today, there is only one point of view, and that is Wikipedia’s viewpoint, which in turn is influenced if not outright dictated by industry and funders with no room for opposing views.

Unfortunately, while colleges used to ban<sup>40,41</sup> students from citing Wikipedia and Snopes in their papers due to it being riddled with “mistakes and sometimes deliberate falsehoods,”<sup>42,43</sup> many now encourage it — a trend that will ensure the perpetuation of bias into a new generation of professionals.

In 2011, Mark E. Moran wrote an article<sup>44</sup> about “The Top 10 Reasons Students Cannot Cite or Rely on Wikipedia” for Finding Dulcinea, Librarian of the Internet. It’s an excellent compilation of why you cannot rely on Wikipedia, and while several years old, it’s more than relevant today. Among these 10 reasons, Moran cites:

- You must never fully rely on any one source for important information
- You especially can’t rely on something when you don’t even know who wrote it



- The contributor with an agenda often prevails
- Individuals with agendas sometimes have significant editing authority
- Accurate contributors can be silenced

## **Some Industries Allowed to Control Own Wikipedia Presence**

Again, the main problem with Wikipedia is that its “facts” are carefully cherry-picked to support a particular agenda. It doesn’t tell both sides of any given story. By so doing, they are destroying investigative journalism, which at its core is about questioning prevailing “facts” to get insight into the story behind the story.

Good journalism asks questions beyond a presentation of facts. A lawyer cannot win a case presenting just the facts. More often than not, intention and motivation need to be taken into account. This is where Wikipedia fails — yet they’ve convinced the very people who should know better (academia and news media) that everything anyone needs to know is on a Wikipedia page.

In “The Wikipedia Revolution,” author Andrew Lih reveals IBM has a senior staffer who polices Wikipedia’s references to IBM 24/7.<sup>45</sup> Meanwhile, many public figures and industries are banned from editing their own pages — including me.

Equally disturbing is the fact that Wikipedia is now teamed up with “fact-checkers” around the world, led by the Poynter Institute, an Associated Press-affiliated, long-standing mentor institution and school for journalism whose motto is: “Democracy needs journalism. Journalism needs Poynter.”

Earlier this year, Poynter compiled a list<sup>46</sup> of 515 “unreliable” websites, including 29 conservative media outlets, based on “fake news” databases created by the Annenberg Public Policy Center, Merrimack College, PolitiFact and Snopes, among others.<sup>47</sup> Poynter also called on advertisers to blacklist the named sites, as advertising dollars is what keeps them going.

On May 2, 2019, after significant backlash,<sup>48</sup> Poynter issued a retraction,<sup>49</sup> saying they had found “weaknesses in the methodology” used to create the list. In two May 1, 2019, Tweets, Stephen Gutowski<sup>50</sup> — a staff writer for The Washington Free Beacon who covers U.S. politics and in 2016 received the Gun Rights Policy Conference’s Journalist of the Year award<sup>51</sup> — wrote:<sup>52</sup>

*“I see the @FreeBeacon is still included in @Poynter’s list. I know for a fact that their staff shares my reporting so I’d love to hear any explanation for why my work and the work of my colleagues is now being deemed unreliable without so much as a single accusation of inaccuracy ...*

*What a disgusting exercise in bad faith from an organization that’s supposed to be about improving and promoting journalism. Instead, they’re creating tabloid-level listicles to smear reporters without offering even a single piece of evidence. Shame on you, @Poynter.”*

However, while Poynter issued a statement saying, “We regret that we failed to ensure that the data was rigorous before publication, and apologize for the confusion and agitation caused by its publication,” it appears the blacklisting is still occurring, through the joint efforts of its International Fact-Checking Network and known free speech deniers Google, Facebook and Snopes.

## **Wikipedia-Google-Poynter — A Censorship Trifecta**

You may wonder how the Poynter Institute,<sup>53</sup> the mission<sup>54</sup> of which is “to fortify journalism’s role in a free society [by championing] freedom of expression, civil dialogue and compelling journalism,” could allow itself to partake of the poisoned apple of subjective censorship and systematic elimination of free thought and freedom of expression.

It does, and it’s important to understand how Poynter not only enables this silencing of free speech, but ultimately is a partner in this effort. In a nutshell, Poynter is a partner with Google, and Google is partners with Wikipedia by virtue of its investments.

October 26, 2017, Google, which funds Wikipedia, announced<sup>55</sup> its partnership with Poynter's International Fact-Checking Network, which aims to bring together and support fact-checkers across the world<sup>56</sup> by promoting best practices and information exchange, monitoring trends, tracking the impact of fact-checking, providing training and advocating for increased fact-checking.<sup>57</sup>

The Network also holds an annual fact-checker's conference called Global Fact.<sup>58,59</sup> Among this year's participants were Facebook (which uses Wikipedia for its fact-checking), Google, Snopes' David Mikkelson and YouTube.<sup>60</sup>

Again, as with Wikipedia contributors and editors, the vast majority of fact-checkers do not have a traditional journalism background, nor are a majority of fact-checking sites run by established media. Increasingly, then, news — and the fact-checking that used to be part of a journalist's job description — is being outsourced to individuals who aren't journalists and aren't trained to think and act like one.

## **Boycott Google and Support Independent Media**

The situation we face today is quite remarkable. Not only has investigative journalism gone the way of the dinosaurs, but Wikipedia, which since its inception in 2001 has proven to be among the least reliable of sources on certain topics, is now being pushed to the foreground as a premier source of breaking news and authentication of expertise and reliability by an internet monopoly, Google, which is leading the charge on global censorship of information that might tarnish the most destructive and dangerous industries on this planet.

It doesn't get a whole lot worse than this, which is why the myth of Wikipedia's supremacy needs to be revealed for what it is — a bias-driven agenda to shape public opinion and thought — and Google's monopoly needs to be broken.

While the U.S. Department of Justice is slated to investigate Google for breach of antitrust laws,<sup>61</sup> we cannot afford to simply hope and wait for the DOJ to break it up. If we work together to boycott them, Google will crumble under its own weight.

- Boycott Google by avoiding any and all Google products:
  - Stop using Google search engines. Alternatives include [DuckDuckGo](#)<sup>62</sup> and [Startpage](#)<sup>63</sup>
  - Uninstall Google Chrome and use the [Opera browser](#) instead, available for all computers and mobile devices.<sup>64</sup> From a security perspective, Opera is far superior to Chrome and offers a free VPN service (virtual private network) to further preserve your privacy
  - If you have a Gmail account, close it and open an account with a non-Google affiliated email service such as [ProtonMail](#),<sup>65</sup> and encrypted email service based in Switzerland
  - Stop using Google docs. Digital Trends has published an article suggesting a number of alternatives<sup>66</sup>
  - If you're a high school student, do not convert the Google accounts you created as a student into personal accounts
- Sign the "[Don't be evil](#)" petition created by Citizens Against Monopoly

## How to Find Mercola.com Articles Moving Forward

You can no longer get any of my articles using keyword searches only in a Google-based search engine. To find my articles, you have to add "Mercola.com" to your search term (example: "Mercola.com heart disease" or "Mercola.com Type 2 diabetes"). Even skipping the ".com" will minimize your search results. So, moving forward, here are a few suggestions for how to stay connected:

- Become a subscriber to my newsletter and encourage your friends and family to do the same. This is the easiest and safest way to make sure you'll stay up to date on important health and environmental issues.

- If you have any friends or relatives who are seriously interested in their health, share important articles with them and encourage them subscribe to our newsletter.
- Nearly all major search engines except Yahoo! and Bing use Google as their primary engines, so if you use them, be sure to type [mercola.com](http://mercola.com) in your search query. This way, you will still find our deeply buried content. Remember, relevant [Mercola.com](http://Mercola.com) articles will NOT show when you're using a keyword search alone anymore.
- Use the [internal Mercola.com search engine](#) when searching for articles on my site.

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