

# Fact Check Funder Publicis Pays \$350 Million for Role in Opioid Epidemic

Analysis by [Dr. Joseph Mercola](#)

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## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › The Publicis Groupe, one of the world's largest PR firms, recently agreed to pay a \$350 million settlement over claims that its false and misleading marketing of opioids contributed to the lethal opioid epidemic in the U.S.
- › Accusations against Publicis Health, Purdue's PR firm, included creating the marketing materials that convinced doctors to overprescribe OxyContin, placing illegal advertisements for OxyContin in the electronic medical records of patients, creating training materials for sales reps on how to combat doctor's objections to the drugs, developing strategies to counter opioid guidelines issued by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and creating marketing strategies to "humanize" the OxyContin brand and counter negative press about addiction risks
- › The \$350 million settlement will be divided among 50 states, with the highest settlement amounts being allocated to California, Florida and Texas. Publicis does not admit wrongdoing or liability as part of the settlement
- › Publicis, which is now paying its way out of legal trouble over the false marketing, is a funder of censorship. Publicis provided seed money to launch NewsGuard, and is officially partnered with NewsGuard "to fight the 'infodemic' of misinformation about COVID-19 and its vaccines"
- › Publicis is also a partner of the World Economic Forum, which is leading the call for a "Great Reset." In fact, Publicis appears to be coordinating the global effort to suppress information that runs counter to the technocratic narrative about COVID-19, its origin, prevention and treatment

The Publicis Groupe – one of the world’s largest PR firms<sup>1</sup> that represents major companies within the technology, pharmaceutical and banking industries – recently agreed to pay a \$350 million settlement over claims that its false and misleading marketing contributed to the opioid epidemic.

Previous court cases demonstrated how Purdue Pharma, maker of OxyContin, systematically misled doctors about the drug’s addictiveness to drive up sales, resulting in an avalanche of opioid addiction and subsequent deaths.

Accusations against [Publicis Health, Purdue’s PR firm](#), included creating the marketing materials that convinced doctors to overprescribe the drug, placing illegal advertisements for OxyContin in the electronic medical records of patients, creating training materials for Purdue sales reps on how to combat doctors’ objections to the drugs, developing strategies to counter opioid guidelines issued by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and creating marketing strategies to “humanize” the OxyContin brand and counter negative press about addiction risks.

While \$350 million may sound like a lot of money, it’s really a drop in the bucket when you consider the damage the opioid epidemic has inflicted, and the fact that the money is being divvied up among 50 states. As reported by CNBC:<sup>2</sup>

*“New York will receive nearly \$19.2 million from the total agreement, according to the state’s consent order with Publicis Health. The highest settlement amounts were allocated to California, Florida and Texas, which respectively received \$34.4 million, \$24.1 million and \$21.6 million.”*

Throughout, Publicis has insisted it did nothing wrong; it merely provided a service to its customer. Publicis also does not admit wrongdoing or liability as part of the settlement.

**“Publicis, which is now paying its way out of legal trouble over false marketing, is also funding the censorship of truth.”**

## Publicis Is Part of the Censorship Network

Publicis, which is now paying its way out of legal trouble over false marketing, is also funding the censorship of truth. Talk about putting its money where its mouth is. As detailed in "[New Thought Police NewsGuard Is Owned by Big Pharma](#)," Publicis was the lead investor among a group of 18 that helped make NewsGuard a reality. Publicis is also officially partnered with NewsGuard "to fight the 'infodemic' of misinformation about COVID-19 and its vaccines."<sup>3</sup>

Like Publicis, NewsGuard's primary role is to deceive the public about what is true and what is not. It set itself up as the self-appointed global arbiter of what information is "trustworthy," based on nine, self-described "credibility and transparency" factors – all of which are entirely subjective.

Using these arbitrary "trustworthiness" criteria, NewsGuard effectively helps suppress dissenting viewpoints by guiding people toward industry- and government-backed narratives and away from everything else, no matter how valid the information may be.

Case in point: In April 2020, [NewsGuard declared my site was "fake news"](#) because we reported that SARS-CoV-2 may have been leaked from the Wuhan Institute of Virology. According to NewsGuard, there was "no evidence that the Wuhan Institute of Virology was the source of the outbreak, and genomic evidence has found that the virus is 96% identical at the whole-genome level to a bat coronavirus."

NewsGuard's position was in direct conflict with published scientific evidence then, and it's even more so now. In a January 25, 2024, [article](#)<sup>4</sup> in the City Journal, science writer, editor and author Nicholas Wade details new evidence<sup>5</sup> obtained by U.S. Right to Know (USRTK) that further strengthens the theory that SARS-CoV-2 was indeed made in a lab.<sup>6</sup> For more details on this, check out the featured video.

## Snopes Is Not an Impartial Fact Checker Either

While we're on the topic of fact checks proven wrong, Snopes.com is another "fact checking" site that repeatedly claimed the COVID lab leak theory was complete bunk. Curiously, in late February 2023, Snopes fact checker David Emery suddenly tried to backtrack, claiming that "Snopes didn't say the lab leak theory couldn't be true," and challenged people to present an instance where Snopes had made that claim.<sup>7</sup>



**david emery**  
@debunker

Snopes didn't say the lab leak theory couldn't be true.

11:55 AM · Feb 28, 2023 · **186** Views

As noted by Matt Orfalea at Censored News:<sup>8</sup>

*"The arrogant ignorance of this Snopes fact-checker is truly something to behold ... Not only did Snopes say the lab leak theory couldn't be true, but Snopes did so repeatedly in at least nine separate 'fact-check' articles by four other Snopes 'fact-checkers,'<sup>9</sup> including the founder of Snopes! And at least one of the 'fact-checks' was shared by Emery himself on Twitter."*

Orfalea goes through them one by one in his article. As previously detailed, **Snopes is NOT a fact checker to be taken seriously**. While some still believe Snopes will provide unbiased feedback on widely circulated stories, the truth is, it too simply regurgitates industry talking points without critical analyses of any kind.

## How BrandGuard Can Bankrupt Alt Media

Getting back to NewsGuard, as bad as it may be to receive a poor NewsGuard rating, that's not the end of your troubles if you're in the alternative media space, because

NewsGuard also has a tool called BrandGuard that sends out “exclusion lists” to advertisers. If you’re on that list, it means you’re a reputational liability to the advertiser.

By getting advertisers to pull its ads from “problematic” media outlets, NewsGuard is directly contributing to the elimination of alternative media, as few can afford to keep going without the revenue stream that advertisers provide.

The scope of this alternative media suppression is greater than most realize, and that’s again in no small measure thanks to Publicis, which has integrated BrandGuard into its fleet of online advertising subsidiaries. As reported by investigative journalist Lee Fang:<sup>10</sup>

*“The question of conflicts arises because Publicis represents a range of corporate and government clients, including Pfizer – whose COVID vaccine has been questioned by some news outlets that have received low scores ...*

*NewsGuard has faced mounting criticism that rather than serving as a neutral public service against online propaganda, it instead acts as an opaque proxy for its government and corporate clients to stifle views that simply run counter to their own interests.*

*The criticism finds support in internal documents, such as the NewsGuard proposal to Twitter, which this reporter obtained during Twitter Files reporting last year, as well as in government records and discussions with independent media sites targeted by the startup.”*

## **Consortium News Sues NewsGuard**

One media site targeted by NewsGuard is Consortium News, founded by Polk Award-winning investigative journalist Robert Parry in 1995. In 2023, NewsGuard tagged Consortium News with a cautionary label, advising readers, advertisers and news aggregation portals to “proceed with caution” because the site had “published false claims about the Ukraine-Russia war.”

In response, Consortium News sued NewsGuard for First Amendment violations and defamation.<sup>11</sup> In an amended complaint, Consortium News attorney Bruce Afran also added the accusation that NewsGuard is suppressing foreign policy dissent at the behest of the U.S. military. As reported by Fang:<sup>12</sup>

*"... NewsGuard ... Consortium claims, is hardly a disinterested fact-checker because of federal influence over it. NewsGuard attached the label after pressing Consortium for retractions or corrections to six articles published on the site.*

*Those news articles dealt with widely reported claims about neo-Nazi elements in the Ukrainian military and U.S. influence over the country – issues substantiated by other credible media outlets.*

*After Consortium editors refused to remove the reporting and offered a detailed rebuttal, the entire site received a misinformation label, encompassing over 20,000 articles and videos published by the outlet since it was founded in 1995.*

*The left-wing news site believes the label was part of a pay-for-censorship scheme. It notes that Consortium News was targeted after NewsGuard received a \$749,387 Defense Department contract in 2021 to identify 'false narratives' relating to the war between Ukraine and Russia, as well as other forms of foreign influence ...*

*'There's a great danger in being maligned this way,' Afran continued. 'The government cannot evade the Constitution by hiring a private party.'"*

## **Publicis Is Part of the Great Reset Cabal**

Publicis is also a partner of the World Economic Forum, which is leading the call for a Great Reset. In fact, as detailed in "[The Web of Players Trying to Silence Truth](#)," Publicis appears to be coordinating the global effort to suppress information that runs counter to the technocratic narrative about COVID-19, its origin, prevention and treatment – suppression and censorship that has been repeatedly aimed at this website specifically.

Publicis is part of an enormous network that includes international drug companies, fact checkers and “credibility raters” like NewsGuard, Google and other search engines, Microsoft, antivirus software companies like Trend Micro, public libraries, schools, the banking industry, the U.S. State Department and Department of Defense, the World Health Organization and the World Economic Forum.

Mind you, this is not a comprehensive review of links. It’s merely a sampling of entities to give you an idea of the breadth of connections, which when taken together explain how certain views — such as information about COVID-19 and vaccines — can be so effectively erased.

To understand the power that PR companies such as Publicis wield, you also need to realize that PR has, by and large, replaced the free press. In decades past, pro-industry advertising stood in stark contrast to the free press, which would frequently expose problems with products and industries, thereby serving as a counterbalance to industry propaganda.

Today, the only counterbalance we have to PR, government propaganda and the mainstream press, is alternative media, which NewsGuard is now undermining.

## **Publicis Is an Arm of Notoriously Untruthful Industries**

What Publicis and NewsGuard call “misinformation” is simply information that contradicts the propaganda being put out by the drug industry. History tells us companies driven by profit interest make poor truth tellers, as negative information will clearly have a detrimental impact on their bottom line. So, they lie and obfuscate for as long as they can get away with it. It’s that simple.

Public relations firms like Publicis are mere arms of these notoriously untruthful industries. They do their bidding because that’s what they’re paid to do. To think that Big Pharma and paid propagandists are looking out for anyone but themselves is dangerously naïve.

It's ironic in the extreme to hear Publicis talk about the need to protect the public from misinformation that might put their health at risk, all while having played a crucial role in one of the deadliest health care schemes involving lies and deceit – the promotion of opioids as nonaddictive.

According to The Great Reset plan, we're in for unprecedented changes – changes few if any would willingly agree to. That's why dissenters must be silenced. The plan can easily get pushed off-track if the public doesn't go along, and that's precisely what can save us.

We must expose the machinations that allow this agenda to be pushed forward. Part of that exposure is looking at the role of big PR companies like Publicis, which helps influence the public mind so that the technocrats can maintain their lies until it's too late to do anything about it.

## Sources and References

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- <sup>1</sup> [World Economic Forum, Publicis Groupe](#)
- <sup>2</sup> [CNBC February 1, 2024](#)
- <sup>3</sup> [Twitter Publicis Health Media April 28, 2021](#)
- <sup>4</sup> [City Journal January 25, 2024](#)
- <sup>5</sup> [USRTK US Geological Survey letter December 5, 2023](#)
- <sup>6</sup> [USRTK January 18, 2024](#)
- <sup>7, 8</sup> [Censored News February 4, 2024](#)
- <sup>9</sup> [Lab Leak Fact Check Articles by Snopes](#)
- <sup>10, 12</sup> [LeeFang.com November 15, 2023](#)
- <sup>11</sup> [Consortium News October 23, 2023](#)