

Your Donations At Work: Our Media Links Last Week



By Hank Campbell — March 27, 2017



Credit: Shutterstock [1]

The American Council on Science and Health was hard at work last week separating health scares from health threats.

But sometimes people in the health scare business fight back. That includes academic journalism professors, a former bureaucrat who insists checking your email will give you brain cancer, and more. So some of our media links are bizarre but, if we didn't include our detractors, we'd be just like them. And we aren't.

1. First, I'll put up to the positive links, then we'll get to the usual anti-science smears.

[Newborn screening needed for sickle cell anemia in Nigeria](#) [2] - The Eagle Online

[DC Science March Organizers Racked By Infighting Over 'Diversity'](#) [3] - The Daily Caller

['Nigeria has highest rate of sickle cell anaemia in the world but no money for cure'](#) [4] - The Cable

[Challenging Danny Hakim's New York Times claim that Monsanto conspired to cover up glyphosate dangers](#) [5] - Genetic Literacy Project

[U.S. provides opportunity for everyone](#) [6] - Gardner News

[Most Americans Dying From Suicide are From Rural Areas and the Rate has Surged by 40 Percent in 16 Years: Study](#) [7] - Telegiz

2. Dr. Alex Berezow was in *The Economist*, arguing that since humans are not clean all of the time, using mice as a "little people" analog is not as accurate. In other words, [we need to let laboratory mice get a little dirty](#)

[8].

After those bits of science outreach, it's all nonsense so stop reading if you don't want to pull your hair out seeing how anti-science people think...

3. Why repeating the claims of US Right To Know should be automatic failure on any science literacy test.

On the blogging site Mic, a left-wing blogger [claims to have discovered a vast pro-science conspiracy](#) [9], and not just all of biology but all nutritionists are involved. An organic food corporate marketing group, famous for fraud and manipulation, is the only source. Alex Orlov claims that a dietitian who has received funding from Monsanto didn't disclose that funding in every Tweet they made and other sort of circumstantial stuff. It follow on the heels of claims by New York Times reporter Danny Hakim that Monsanto was colluding to ghost-write papers, claims that were debunked by the journals.

What does it have to do with us? Orlov's circumstantial evidence for a vast pro-science conspiracy is that we got an unrestricted grant from one Ag company, but then suggests we used that money to pay a bestselling science author to write about the controversy over a product *made by their competitor*.

It boggles the rational mind. And it's hypocrisy. A real journalist would quickly ask why the "research director" of US Right To Know, a journalist fired from Reuters after engaging in anti-science activism using their brand, wrote an opinion piece in *Time* and did not disclose that she is entirely funded by a corporate trade group to promote their agenda against scientists.

The Mic blogger was surprised I did not deny funding from an ag company. Why would I? Like American Heart Association, United Way, Mother Jones, and plenty of other groups we will take funding from any corporation that wants to send it. She may want to believe that if ChemChina sends us an unrestricted grant, and we later write about science done by Dow, they are somehow connected. That's what makes conspiracy theorists tick.

4. Should NYU employees be doing something more valuable with the student loan debt that pays their \$270,000 salaries than smearing scientists?

Charles Seife, who has had repeated [retractions](#) [10] and [concerns about his work](#) [10] due to his cozy relationship with USRTK, never declares a conflict about the fact that he is a favorite co-author of anti-science mouthpiece Paul Thacker. [The journal PLoS retracted a hit piece](#) [11] by Seife, [even his political ally Union of Concerned Scientists criticized his repeated smear campaigns against the science community](#) [12], and last week [he claimed I was an "industry fron group"](#) [13] because his leash-holders at USRTK needed his help.

Like a good anti-science toady, he dutifully complied. Yet he is a journalism professor at NYU. There may be some chance he is teaching kids.

Naturally, I wrote to the Director Dr. Perri Klass, MD, who runs the department.

She was dismissive about the libelous conduct of her department.

Dear Mr. Campbell,

Our faculty members are responsible for their own social media activities, and you should contact them directly to discuss any concerns.

Yours,

Perri Klass

Perri Klass, MD

Professor of Journalism and Pediatrics

Director, Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute

New York University

"Our faculty members are responsible for their own social media activities, and you should contact them directly to discuss any concerns."

What an odd thing to reply. Imagine what her department would do if a private sector corporation engaged in the kinds of behavior NYU is doing. Wouldn't a corporation at least note that one of the people involved is simply lying about their relationship with the organization? Dr. Klass, what if your employees promoted racism or pedophilia or endorsed President Trump's restriction on travel to Muslims? Would NYU still have no interest in their social media activities?

It means *every corporation in the United States has more ethics than the NYU journalism school.*

Since Dr. Klass is aware of any social media guidelines I spent five seconds on Google, the combined amount of time her employees spent learning about us, [and found them](#) [14].

They read things like "Represent yourself accurately and be transparent about your role at NYU", so, don't lie about being a professor when you just taught a class as an adjunct, like Mike Balter does. And "Social media provides a place to foster community and conversation. Adding value is good when on topic and in moderation." In other words, don't be a lying muckspout about your conflicts of interest, the way Charles Seife is. And don't just be a clueless buffoon and manufacture new criticisms when you are shown to be biased in your original, the way Dan Fagin has.

5. Wacky activist insists checking your email is giving you cancer

Devra Lee Davis, a sociologist (PhD in "science studies"), activist and sometime epidemiologist whose key credentials are being a "former senior advisor" to the *assistant* secretary for *health* in the Department of Health and Human Services (but also claims she has a 2007 Nobel Peace Prize because she co-wrote one paper for an IPCC working group) claims we are all wrong in assuring the public that checking email is not giving them brain cancer. Cell phones, iPads, antennas, cell towers, if anyone got testicular cancer or breast cancer or autism or even what she calls "digital dementia", she links it to wireless-radiation exposure, even though all of the devices have too many differences over decades to count.

[She claims](#) [15], as activists always do, that in debunking such scaremongering that we must be part of a vast, pro-science conspiracy - the second time that happened last week. All of the scientists who agree with us must be "to be on the payroll of the industry-connected group the American Council on Science and Health", which makes little sense.

Does she think wireless router manufacturers are buying us off? She believes Mother Jones conspiracy tales but does not believe the entire CDC. Yes, her paranoid rants claim CDC scientists are on the take as well.

Ms. Davis, there is no Big Wi-Fi consortium out there blocking you and making sure we get published. It's tinfoil hat stuff. And [your belief in junk science has been well-documented](#) [16].

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Our job never ends. Thanks for being part of the community. If you are not a member of ACSH but want to continue to make sure we can stand up against partisan humanities academics and fringe anti-science beliefs, please [make a donation here](#) [17].

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- [10] <http://retractionwatch.com/2015/08/24/following-criticism-plos-removes-blog-defending-scrutiny-of-science/>
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- [13] <http://www.acsh.org/news/2017/03/24/new-york-university-journalism-academics-stop-libeling-scientists-and-doctors-11032>
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