

# In Exchange for \$200 Million, UC Irvine Legitimizes Pseudoscience



By Julianna LeMieux — September 22, 2017



UC Irvine [1]

For some time, infusion clinics and naturopaths have been cropping up in between nail salons and hardware stores in strip malls across the country. But, integrative medicine crossed a line this past week that will allow it to be deeply and firmly rooted in a major, reputable academic institution.

This line was crossed with a \$200 million donation made to University of California, Irvine - the seventh largest donation ever made to a public university in the United States. (1)

The money, given by Susan and Henry Samueli, is given to develop "the nation's first university-wide enterprise to embed integrative health approaches in research, teaching and patient care." With the money, UC Irvine will build a new facility and hire up to 15 new faculty members.

Not only that, but what this money does is to give alternative medicine - such as homeopathy and acupuncture - a leg to stand on. These practices are pseudoscience and, although popular, are not backed by scientific evidence. This move legitimizes these practices, which is not something that science has been able to do thus far.

"This is ultimately a very bad thing," said Dr. Steven Novella, a neurologist at Yale University who is passionate and outspoken about medicine that is backed with science evidence said, "It's putting emphasis and the imprimatur of a university on things that have been discarded as medical fraud for 50 years."

This is not the first time the Samuelis have sponsored research into alternative medicine. The Samueli Institute for Information Biology which states that they are, "exploring the science of healing," focuses on the power of multiple alternative healing therapies. They state on their

website that the

*"Samueli Institute is engaged in research on the effectiveness and integration of healing- oriented practices and their role in wellness and health care. The Institute supports innovative, multidisciplinary investigations of complementary and alternative medicine and integrative health care therapies such as acupuncture, yoga, natural products and mind-body practices through a variety of research methodologies. Our portfolio includes nutrition and lifestyle research, the role of the brain and mind in healing, and the placebo/meaning effect. We also conduct research and evaluations of Optimal Healing Environments and their role in health and healing."*

That sounds like a private institute, created and funded by two people who are deep believers in alternative medicine. What makes us think that the program that they are going to fund at UC Irvine will be any different?

This center at UC Irvine is not only upsetting because alternative medicine is being legitimized by a top rated academic institution.

This is also incredibly upsetting because an academic institution accepted money given with an agenda that is not backed by science. If this is the case, academics can forget about the peer review process of grant applications - and just rely on rich people to pay us to study what they want. Imagine MIT accepting money to set up a center to investigate astrology or the existence of the Loch Ness monster. The line that has been crossed is the line where academia becomes a place where money influences what is true or false.

References:

(1) <http://beta.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-uc-irvine-donation-20170918-st...> [2]

(2) <https://www.statnews.com/2017/09/20/uci-integrative-medicine-gift/> [3]

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[1] <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:UCISign.jpg>

[2] <http://beta.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-uc-irvine-donation-20170918-story.html>

[3] <https://www.statnews.com/2017/09/20/uci-integrative-medicine-gift/>