

10 Worst Bogus Health Stories of 2018



By Alex Berezow — December 27, 2018



Credit: Storyblocks [1]

There is so much disinformation on the Internet, that debunking junk science and bogus health claims could be a full-time job. Indeed, debunkery is one of the main reasons why ACSH exists.

Narrowing down a full year's worth of nonsense into the 10 worst bogus health stories is quite a challenge. But we never shy away from a challenge. Here are the stinkiest stories from 2018:

#10. Our children are suffering from "video gaming disorder." Any health story about our children will go viral, no matter how ridiculous. This year, many hands were wrung over video games. Parents are worried that Little Johnny is spending too much time playing Fortnite. In reality, this is normal childhood behavior. Kids go through various phases, and obsession with something (like dinosaurs) is usually one of those phases. We shouldn't pathologize childhood. Otherwise, if "video gaming disorder" is real, then maybe "[dinosaur obsession disorder](#)" [2] is, too.

#9. Trace amounts of formaldehyde in your food are dangerous. Formaldehyde is one of those chemicals that sounds scary. It's even used in embalming fluid. Food activists use that information to scare the living daylights out of people. We should eliminate every trace of formaldehyde from our lives, right? Not so fast. [Formaldehyde is actually made by our bodies in very large quantities. You'd be dead without it](#) [3] because it is used by our bodies to make DNA. Our bodies make, use, and dispose of far more formaldehyde than you will ever come in contact with in the environment.

#8. Everyday products in America are secretly killing you. According to the scaremongers, the world's most popular herbicide, [glyphosate, is giving you cancer](#) [4]. So is [baby powder](#) [5]. Asparagus? You guessed it. [Cancer!](#) [6] Coffee? [Don't ask](#) [7]. Did you have a glass of wine last night? Too bad, because [that's killing you, too](#) [8]. Does your kid have a [rubber ducky](#) [9]? That's a

death trap. To be safe, you should avoid eating, drinking, and bathing. Otherwise, you might die.

#7. Raw water becomes the latest health fad. Some ideas are so stupid, that one wonders how anyone could be fooled by them. But there's a sucker born every minute, and the suckers are now buying [raw water](#) [10]. There are two good reasons not to drink it: Diarrhea and death. That beautiful mountain spring might actually have something nasty in it, like *Cryptosporidium*. So, smart people don't drink raw water... or consume [raw meat](#) [11].

#6. Naturopaths in Alaska want the right to prescribe medicine. There are some truths that are self-evident: (1) Don't give a chimpanzee a machine gun; and (2) Don't allow frauds to prescribe medicine. As I wrote in [Little Black Book of Junk Science](#) [12]: "Naturopaths are the High Priests of alternative medicine. They wholeheartedly reject Western medicine and modern science." [They should never be allowed near patients](#) [13], let alone a pharmacy.

#5. Discredited doomsday prophet Paul Ehrlich speaks again. Whenever Paul Ehrlich opens his mouth, something weird is bound to come out. For the uninitiated, Ehrlich is the author of *The Population Bomb*, a widely discredited book that predicted mass starvation due to overpopulation. Obviously, that never happened, but data and dignity don't matter to him. Like a turd in a swimming pool, [Ehrlich resurfaced again this year](#) [14] to push conspiracy theories about overpopulation, chemicals, and the World Economic Forum.

#4. Cigarette use has collapsed, so the media scares people about vaping [15], **instead.** To be perfectly clear, people (especially teenagers) who currently do not smoke should not begin vaping for the fun of it. E-cigarettes should be seen as a quitting tool. Having said that, exaggerating the health risks of vaping -- which could potentially save millions of smokers' lives -- is counterproductive to public health.

#3. Anti-vaxxers continue to convince people to avoid vaccines, as measles makes a roaring comeback. According to the [World Health Organization](#) [16], more than 40,000 Europeans have been sickened with measles in the first six months of 2018 alone. Additionally, there were 37 deaths. Despite this, the [French are scared of vaccines](#) [17], and apparently, so are [people in Alaska](#) [18]. There are few signs that the influence of anti-vaxxers is beginning to wane ([we just elected one to Congress](#) [19]), despite the fact that [deadly infectious disease outbreaks are occurring all over the world](#) [20].

#2. Dr. Oz was appointed by Donald Trump to the President's Council on Sports, Fitness, and Nutrition. America's Quack has given a national platform to [anti-vaxxers, conspiracy theorists, all types of snake oil salesmen, and people who claim to talk to the dead](#) [21]. Recently, he [endorsed astrology](#) [22]. For peddling fraud to millions of people, he ought to have his medical license revoked. But, in our [postmodern society](#) [23] -- where facts don't matter and truth is relative -- he was given a national honor.

#1. The federal government keeps fumbling the opioid crisis. Dr. Josh Bloom has been sounding the alarm for years. The ongoing opioid overdose epidemic has little to do with pain patients; very few became hooked on Vicodin or similar prescription meds. Today's surge in deaths results from people who used the drugs recreationally and became addicted. They are the victims of deadly fentanyl, which has largely replaced heroin as the street drug of "choice." That's

why our nation's crackdown on prescription opioids didn't fix anything; [overdose deaths have continued to increase](#) [24]. And now, chronic pain patients are suffering because they can't get the meds they need. Thankfully, people like Dr. Vanila Singh (Chief Medical Officer to the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health) are aware of the problem and are acting to fix it.

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- [1] https://www.storyblocks.com/stock-image/female-doctor-sqt652wm_zj6gtzv5f
- [2] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2018/01/02/video-gaming-disorder-just-dinosaur-obsession-disorder-12354>
- [3] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2018/09/05/formaldehyde-so-dangerous-you-d-be-dead-without-it-13366>
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- [13] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2018/03/19/alaska-should-shut-down-naturopaths-instead-allowing-them-prescribe-medicine-12722>
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- [16] <http://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/sections/press-releases/2018/measles-cases-hit-record-high-in-the-european-region>
- [17] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2018/08/28/french-are-scared-vaccines-measles-ravages-europe-13364>
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- [24] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2018/12/12/dear-propcdc-heres-what-happens-when-you-over-restrict-pills-more-deaths-nice-going-13663>