

Dispatch: Fox n' Toxins, Smoke n' Smokeless, FDA's A-List, Warren's Warning, plus CSM

By ACSH Staff — March 2, 2010

With Fox and Friends, Who Needs Enemies?

ACSH's Dr. Elizabeth Whelan was horrified by Fox News' [Fox and Friends coverage](#) [1] of the latest Mt. Sinai study linking environmental 'toxins' to autism: "In all my years of observing coverage of public health issues, I've never seen coverage as bad as this *Fox and Friends* segment. There was no attempt at balance whatsoever. They basically said, 'Well, autism a terrible disease,' and then mentioned that chemicals are everywhere.

"They also singled out phthalates as being dangerous to a growing fetus and recommended that pregnant women avoid shampoos and other personal care products that may have traces of phthalates. There is no scientific basis whatsoever to make such a recommendation. The segment was completely devoid of science and common sense and only served to scare pregnant women and parents of young children. We encourage Dispatch readers to [respond to Fox](#) [2] if they agree with us."

NYT: Better Stick to Cigarettes

A [question-and-answer feature](#) [3] in today's *New York Times* Science section asks what sort of health effects are incurred by switching from cigarettes to smokeless tobacco. The answer is enough to convince anyone to keep smoking, citing a study in *The Lancet* that found "the risk of both fatal and nonfatal heart attacks with smokeless tobacco use was virtually equal to the risk with cigarette use."

"I have never seen more lethal misinformation contained in a few hundred words than I see right here," responds ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross. "The one time the answer actually compares the risk of smokeless versus cigarettes is when he cites this study, and even if that study says what he claims it does, then it contradicts many other studies that this answer ignores. The writer, by choosing two studies to support his own predetermined conclusion, is rendering his readers a potentially lethal dose of misinformation."

Predicting the Future of Harm Reduction Just Got Easier

The FDA announced the [voting roster](#) [4] for its Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee, and the outlook is grim for supporters of harm reduction.

“This panel is stacked against harm reduction,” explains ACSH’s Jeff Stier. “It includes a member of the American Cancer Society, which has already gone on record opposing harm reduction. It’s also surprising to see Dr. Jack Henningfield listed, since he’s a consultant for GlaxoSmithKline, which makes NicoDerm CQ patches and Nicorette gum. The FDA has gone out of their way in the past to keep pharmaceutical consultants off of their scientific advisory panels, and GSK makes nicotine replacement therapies that would have to compete with tobacco harm reduction products. Moreover, Dr. Henningfield has a patent on a proprietary nicotine replacement product. You would think after seeing Dr. Henningfield’s name on here it couldn’t get any worse, but then you get to Dr. Gregory Niles Connolly.”

“Connolly is the most extreme anti-harm-reduction person I’ve ever heard of,” says Dr. Whelan. “Imagine if I were on the panel, everyone would be shouting about how I support harm reduction, saying that’s a bias. In this day of conflict-of-interest alarmism, it’s hard to imagine a more biased group.”

Warren Buffet on Adding Years to Your Life

Ira Stoll’s Future of Capitalism blog [summarizes](#) [5] Warren Buffet’s recent CNBC appearance, with one mention especially that caught ACSH staffers’ attention: “And on whether Coke...is contributing to childhood obesity and diabetes, Mr. Buffett had this to say: ‘it’s just a question of how many calories you stuff in your mouth, basically, and there’s a lot of ways to do it. And if somebody told me that I live a year longer by eating nothing but broccoli and asparagus from now on, I would just say...every day will seem like as long.’”

“Mr. Buffet seems to be positioning himself as an [ACSH advisor](#) [6],” says Stier.

You Read It Here First

ACSH staffers’ comments in the Dispatch do not go unnoticed. Today’s *Christian Science Monitor* [quotes Dispatch](#) [7] in its coverage of President Obama’s efforts to quit smoking, and recently the *Los Angeles Times* used the Dispatch as source for information about *PLoS Medicine*.

“What you read here is our first take on a news item, and what you’re reading here today will be in tomorrow’s papers,” says Stier. “There is a growing group of reporters who are reading the Dispatch and using it as a source for their coverage, but you’re reading it here first.”

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Links

[1] http://video.foxnews.com/v/4057071/study-toxins-linked-to-autism?playlist_id=87249

[2] <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,77538,00.html>

[3] <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/02/science/02qna.html?ref=health>

[4]

<http://www.fda.gov/AdvisoryCommittees/CommitteesMeetingMaterials/TobaccoProductsScientificAdvisoryCommittee/u>

[5] <http://www.futureofcapitalism.com/2010/03/warren-buffett-on-cnbc>

[6] <https://www.acsh.org/../../../../about/pageID.89/default.asp>

[7] <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/2010/0301/Obama-still-lighting-up-but-anti-smoking-groups-laud-effort-to-quit>