

Jack Dini vs. the world of junk science (and the rest of the world)

By ACSH Staff — June 15, 2015



Talk about a big job. Writing for the Canadian Press, Jack Dini's

[new piece](#) [1], *Chemicals Don't Trouble Oneself With the Facts*, goes way past the title.

Dini, who wrote a book entitled [Challenging Environmental Myths](#) [2] (Institution of Engineering and Technology, 2003) comes out with guns blazing, and covers far more than chemicals. He writes about the inability of facts to change people's minds, how and why they cling to their beliefs despite evidence to the contrary, and how the unparalleled amount of information that we are now exposed to contributes to this: In other words, it's never been easier for people to be wrong, and at the same time feel more certain that they're right.

Dini also examines GMOs, as well as the psychology behind the fear of them: ...the human mind is highly susceptible to the negative and often emotional representations put out by certain environmental groups and other opponents of GMOs.

If this sounds like something that might come out of ACSH, in a way it is. Recently, we have featured two of his articles on [chemophobia](#) [3], and the way that naturally occurring poisons are overlooked, while synthetic chemicals are generally [considered to be toxic](#) [4].

Regarding charismatic charlatans and quacks, he quotes ACSH's Dr. Gil Ross: Unfortunately, all too often the snake-oil pitchmen do not appear as they did when P. T. Barnum was running the show. These days, they come all dressed up, often in scrubs and a stethoscope and do their pitching to a mass audience on popular TV shows.

He eventually gets around to chemicals, and not surprisingly, uses aspartame as an example of mass hysteria over nothing. Bowing to public pressure, Pepsi has banned the use of the artificial sweetener: [This trend appears to be driven by a widespread and largely unfounded fear the public has about aspartame. This move might be good for Pepsi's business, but it probably won't help dispel any of the myths about artificial sweeteners that have persisted for decades. Aspartame has been studied for more than 30 years, and there's no good evidence suggesting it causes harm to humans.

Dini saves much of his wrath for the policies of California, citing RealClearScience's Alex Berezow's experience at San Francisco airport, where he ran into a sign warning of cancer at a gate: *This area contains chemicals known to the State of California to cause cancer and birth defects or other reproductive harm.*

[Berezow wrote](#) [5], So, I looked around. There was a sandwich shop, a few trash cans, and several tired passengers in the waiting area. No cataclysmic carcinogens there. The carpet looked clean. Was the sign referring to carpet cleaner? Or was it referring to the jet bridge, where you might get a brief whiff of jet fuel? The absurdly ominous and vague sign left the threat entirely to your imagination.

ACSH's Dr. Josh Bloom also [wrote about the insanity of this warning](#) [6] a product of the state's Proposition 65 after he got a bird feeder from California with a cancer warning on it.

Dini says, The foolishness of California is the inevitable consequence of a chemophobic society that wields the evil twins of regulation and litigation as weapons in a fruitless effort to achieve the impossible: a life completely free of any risk or chemical whatsoever.

If any of this sounds familiar, we thank you for reading our Daily Dispatch, where we deal with nonsense like this virtually every day.

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Links

[1] <http://canadafreepress.com/index.php/members/1/JackDini/674>

[2] <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/challenging-environmental-mythology-jack-w-dini/1115257388?ean=9781891121296>

[3] <http://acsh.org/2014/10/shoutout-acsh-friend-jack-dini-informative-column-chemophobia/>

[4] <http://acsh.org/2010/08/presidents-cancer-report-synthetic-chemicals-bad-natural-chemicals-ignored/>

[5] <http://www.alexberozow.com/getting-cancer-at-san-francisco-airport/>

[6] <http://www.medicalprogressstoday.com/2012/01/Preposterous-Propositions.php>