

Why Won't the Andrew Wakefield Nightmare End?



By Julianna LeMieux — May 17, 2016



Every time I think that this nightmare might be over, Andrew

Wakefield is back in the news.

This time, the rights to his 2010 book have recently been acquired, and it looks like my nightmare is going to become a Hollywood film.

Wakefield's book entitled "Callous Disregard: Autism and Vaccines — The Truth Behind a Tragedy," is his version of a story that we now know all too well — his view of the events surrounding the retraction of his *Lancet* paper published in 1998 describing a false link between vaccines and autism. In it, Wakefield, who has been barred from practicing medicine, strives to "reveal the inside story."*

Judging by the filmmaking couple behind the acquisition, Terry Rossio and Dr. Jocelyn Stamat, it appears that this will not be a small movie, either.

Terry Rossio is an incredibly successful screenwriter who wrote, most notably, "Shrek" and the three "Pirates of the Caribbean" movies. Dr. Jocelyn Stamat is an ear, nose and throat doctor who has been trying her hand in "the business" over the last eight years.

The quotes that Rossio and Stamat gave recently regarding their motivations for the book acquisition raise concerns about how Wakefield will be portrayed, and hint that the movie will present a distorted and sympathetic view.

- "Dr. Wakefield is clearly a polarizing figure, reviled by the general public yet also revered by many."
- "The details and drama surrounding his life are even more remarkable than generally known."
- "We look forward to bringing Andrew Wakefield's personal story to the screen and exploring a topic of vast importance to public health and the health of the nation's children."

In addition, in a comment written by Dr. Stamat in a [New York Times](#) [1] article on Bill Maher's anti-vaccination stance in 2009, she is highly skeptical of the swine flu vaccine. She went on to state, "I am not anti-vaccine, just pro-awareness." It is hard to believe, however, that a doctor who is "not anti-vaccine" is taking part in the production of a movie about Andrew Wakefield's life based on his perspective.

Herein lies my nightmare — a big blockbuster film portraying Wakefield as a smart, but misunderstood one-time doctor with a gentle soul, fighting for the autistic community and changing how people see him and his story.

Rossio is, after all, the same writer who made us all have a warm spot for Captain Jack Sparrow.

My main concerns are:

- (1) The movie will prevent people from seeing Wakefield for the despicable person that he is. ("Callous disregard" was the term that was used by the General Medical Council regarding his treatment of children.)
- (2) More importantly, it will give additional support to the wrong idea that vaccines cause autism.

The real nightmare is that I simply can't understand how people are still supporting Wakefield. And, I can't figure out what to do about it. I wonder why Wakefield's supporters are, in some ways, so much more effective at getting their message out than those on the side of science? What do we need to do?

Unfortunately, I do not make films and I do not look like Jenny McCarthy.

Of course, I will add whoever is cast in this movie to my "Do Not Watch Their Movies" list, which is headed by Jim Carrey, Jenny McCarthy (wouldn't watch her movies anyway), Robert DeNiro, Bill Maher, Alicia Silverstone and others.

(Oh God -- please don't let Chris Pine get cast.)

You will be hearing much more about this from the American Council, both before this movie hits a box office near you, and after.

However, it is simply not enough to do what we are doing. We need to do more before more people get sick and die from vaccine-preventable diseases.

*<http://www.callous-disregard.com> [2]

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[1] <http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/10/13/bill-maher-vs-the-flu-vaccine/comment-page-4/>

[2] <http://www.callous-disregard.com>