

The Promotion of Scientific Bias on Wikipedia

Progressive Radio Network, October 23, 2019

During the past two years, our investigations into Wikipedia and modern Skepticism, focused primarily upon subjects related to Complementary and Alternative Medicine (e.g., Chiropractic, acupuncture, naturopathy, Traditional Chinese Medicine, homeopathy, etc.), as well as individual practitioners and advocates of these nonconventional medical systems (e.g., Drs. Deepak Chopra, Larry Dossey, David Perlmutter, etc.), has shown extreme bias, distortion of facts, shoddy selection of legitimate references and a systemic effort to conceal from the IRS, Congress and the media what we believe is institutional corruption. Furthermore, during this period, we have composed and disseminated over 50 articles to deconstruct Wikipedia and its Skeptic editors. Much of this same information has been sent to Wikipedia's co-founder Jimmy Wales and the Wikimedia Foundation Board members.

Equally important, based upon the data and evidence, the character assassination of entire groups of health practitioners, likely numbering in the tens of thousands, represents in our opinion a crime against humanity. Why? Because there are thousands of studies published in the peer-reviewed literature that prove that the image Wikipedia attempts to convey to the public is grossly wrong. Even products such as pesticides, genetically modified foods, and chemicals in common household products that international health bodies have declared as carcinogenic or the cause for serious illness, are routinely whitewashed on Wikipedia.

At the same time, Wikipedia editors who control many of the health pages, condemn, ridicule and vilify with animus the scientific conclusions that show alternative medical therapies can prevent and reverse life-threatening diseases. In fact, these editors have become so brazen, they brag about their skills and success in targeting living persons to destroy their reputations.

Such shameful and ideologically-driven activity is being supported by the Foundation's Board and fiduciaries because of the personal philosophy of its co-founder Jimmy Wales, who is aligned with the tenets of modern Skepticism.

Our attorneys have repeatedly provided factual documentation showing evidence for all of the above to the Foundation's Board members. This includes examples of individuals who control the biographical pages of living persons who are viciously attacked and who operate within a network of secret communications that are in direct violation of Wikipedia's standards. Despite the evidence now in the Board's hands, it has continued to permit this illegal activity to occur because biographies remain unchanged.

Unlike other legitimate encyclopedias that rely upon experts and professional scholars in their fields to generate content and have very strict rules for what and what cannot be used as referenced resources, Wikipedia is far more vague and ambiguous; consequently, the encyclopedia is riddled with tendentious and bigoted content. Nor is any expertise required to edit on Wikipedia pages.

To further highlight the extent of Wikipedia's problems, and the depth of the systemic rot that infiltrates its medical and health pages, the following information was provided by a former editor who has worked within Wikipedia as an administrator.

It is now time to insist that the US Congress and the Inspector General of the IRS undertake an audit of the Wikimedia Foundation to determine whether the organization is in violation of its non-profit status and transgresses the statutes of the federal Communication Decency Act. If so, the Foundation should be held accountable for the thousands of cases of defamation and erroneous information leveled at individuals who have discovered they have no viable recourse to correct the untruths on Wikipedia. Mr. Wales and his Foundation, on the other hand, believe they can operate above the law and are exempt from the consequences of their actions. In the meantime, we continue to be flooded with new additional information, including from individuals within Wikipedia. Therefore, we are preparing litigation to hold the Foundation accountable for the on-going aspersion of living persons that it has allowed for many years.

Examples of Negative Bias on Wikipedia Alternative Medical Pages

There is a dedicated movement to force an orthodox, skeptic view on Wikipedia. This is an effort that is well-known, catalogued, and recognized as a source of misinformation and bias.

There is a Wikipedia page (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Skepticism) that organizes and instructs these skeptics to:

- List acceptable/unacceptable ideas
- Share hatred of “pseudo” topics
- Strategize on how to rewrite those topics
- Share ideological talking points
- Outline “hit-list” of articles that need to be changed to be more negative

Below are a handful of quotes from various articles on the skeptic “hit-list.” In all of them other editors quickly notice the skeptics inserting obvious negative bias and complain, but the skeptic editors organize and collaborate to reject all complaints and any narrative but their own. There are hundreds of quotes like the ones sampled below.

1. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)

- 1.1. **[REJECTED BIAS COMPLAINT]** The lead is presently dwelling heavily on the lack of scientific support for the notions behind TCM, and for its efficacy. The prominence of this material in the lead strongly implies a [WP:FRINGE/WP:MEDRS](#)-solid entire section about this, but it is absent. We either need that in this article, or a well-sourced split-off article. [50.78.103.6 \(talk\)](#) 23:21, 10 August 2019 (UTC)
- 1.2. **[In REJECTING a bias complaint that the TCM article was biased and trying to force the terms pseudoscience and fringe, a leading skeptic editor sarcastically replied]** You appear to be working from the assumption that TCM is not based upon pseudoscience and [fringe theories](#). -- [Ronz \(talk\)](#) 18:16, 19 May 2018 (UTC)
- 1.3. **[REJECTED BIAS COMPLAINT]** I think it's inaccurate to place TCM in the same group with "scientific racism" and vaccine conspiracies. It would make more sense to group the alternative medicines covered by health insurance, separate from the truly fringe medicine. So this would

require two groups instead of the current one. There would be an "Alternative Medicine" series, and a "Pseudo-medicine" series. [Thorbatchev \(talk\)](#) 10:04, 26 February 2018 (UTC)

- 1.4. **[REJECTED BIAS COMPLAINT]** Please either change the title of this topic to 'CLASSICAL CHINESE MEDICINE', or change the content completely. The historical information in this article is incorrect. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) was created in the 1950's under the communist party. TCM was created to 'fuse' it with the western world and many of the mentioned aspects of the classical practice of medicine (Yin/Yang, 5 Elements and all the ancient historical references) have been either adulterated or removed from the learning and practice of TCM. Classical Chinese Medicine is the ancient and historical practice of Chinese Medicine, which this article is mostly about. This article confuses the two and is therefore incorrect. [92.211.57.142 \(talk\)](#) 15:47, 9 October 2019 (UTC)
- 1.5. **[REJECTION]** No. [Roxy, the dog. woof](#) 15:51, 9 October 2019 (UTC)

2. **Acupuncture**

- 2.1. **[Unsupported assertion used to REJECT inclusion of any peer-reviewed medical studies supporting acupuncture]** This is true, but not in the way you claim. Use of stage dagger needles and other improved blinding techniques have indeed demonstrated that acupuncture works by fooling the patient into reporting an improvement, rather than by actually effecting any improvement. [Guy \(help!\)](#) 14:42, 14 September 2019 (UTC)
- 2.2. **[REJECTED BIAS COMPLAINT]** This article lists acupuncture as a pseudoscience based on the opinion of a webpage using research more than 20 years old. The WHO considers acupuncture to be part of a system of East Asian medicine that is valid enough that the next round of ICD codes will include Chinese Medicine diagnosis codes like Liver Spleen Disharmony which has a scientifically valid and measurable symptom picture. The Department of Health and Human Services in its 2019 Task Force report lists acupuncture as a first line treatment for pain and the VA includes it as a standard option for treatment of a variety of conditions including pain and PTSD. This is far from a pseudoscience and Wikipedia needs to catch up to the results of research less than 20 years old. [Atymy33 \(talk\)](#) 02:52, 22 October 2019 (UTC)
- 2.3. **[REJECTED BIAS COMPLAINT]** I am concerned by the accent of the "pseudoscience" aspect weighed in the article. It is a well-known fact that a.p. is a form of alternative medicine but it seems like this article was written as an attempt to disprove it by skeptoscience, pointing out inconsistencies in studies instead of describing its methods and goals (and their means). Reading through the whole article, I barely resist the urge to change the title to "the pseudoscience of acupuncture". [kuchesezik](#) 21:56, 20 February 2019 (UTC)
- 2.4. **[REJECTION]** You do not understand how science works, and you do not understand how Wikipedia works. Please drop the [WP:STICK](#). --[Hob Gadling \(talk\)](#) 04:47, 21 February 2019 (UTC)
- 2.5. **[REJECTED BIAS COMPLAINT]** You "Guys" are saying that "science says" something that *some* scientific studies have concluded, but not all. It's pretty unscientific to say things like "science (as if it were an entity) has this very simple judgement about this pretty complicated topic". It's silly, and people that come to the article recognize that the tone of the article is cartoonish in its amplification of few voices (Ernst and Novella).[Herbxue \(talk\)](#) 23:40, 20 February 2019 (UTC)
- 2.6. **[REJECTION]** Ernst's Law absolutely applies to Wikipedia articles: if you are writing about alt-med and you are not hated by the alt-med world, you're not doing it right. [Guy \(Help!\)](#) 23:54, 21 February 2019 (UTC)

3. Chiropractic

- 3.1. **[REJECTED BIAS COMPLAINT]** I gather from the article, and particularly this talk page that this article is under heavy attack from trolling, presumably proponents of chiropractic. It is now locked stating that chiropractic is a pseudoscience, as evidenced by a paper from last decade. However, things are moving. Just last year JAMA (yes, journal of American medical association) published a [Cochrane meta analysis of randomized clinical trials](#) of the chiropractic spinal manipulation, and the results came out in favor of the intervention. So today it's simply not evidence-based to claim that it is a pseudoscience. Therefore I think this is a good example of overeager wiki editors trying to defend their own world view, rather than yield to evidence based world views. [LasseFolkersen \(talk\)](#) 06:57, 22 August 2018 (UTC)
- 3.2. **[REJECTION by skeptic editor, declaring Wikipedia must be based on scientific sources]** You have no hope of winning this, not because of external circumstances, but because you are wrong and you only have bad reasoning on your side. "supported by controlled clinical trials" - This is a gross misrepresentation of the facts. You picked one study out of the total data base. The fact that it confirms your opinion does not mean chiropractic is science, it means you used the invalid method of [cherry picking](#). "Agenda-pushers" is not the crux here, "bad reasoning" is. You are not competent to tell good reasoning from bad reasoning, and therefore your own agenda-pushing fails. Of course you fall back on [argumentum ad hominem](#), as pseudoscience proponents usually do. --[Hob Gadling \(talk\)](#) 17:05, 22 August 2018 (UTC)
- 3.3. **[REJECTION by skeptic editor, declaring Wikipedia must be based on popular sources, not individual scientific sources]** Meta-analyses of all available studies of one specific treatment against one specific ailment. You cherry picked the meta-analysis of the one ailment chiropractics can do something against and ignored all the other studies on ailments that they try to do something against, but fail abysmally... --[Hob Gadling \(talk\)](#) 17:32, 22 August 2018 (UTC)
- 3.4. **[REJECTION by skeptic editor, declaring Wikipedia must be based on undetermined "reliable" sources, not popular sources]** Wikipedia looks at the reliable sources, not at search engine hits... --[Hob Gadling \(talk\)](#) 18:50, 22 August 2018 (UTC)

Examples of Negative Bias on Wikipedia Biographies of Living Persons

Below are a handful of quotes from various biographies of people in the complementary/alternative medicine field, all on the skeptic "hit-list." In many of them other editors quickly notice the skeptics inserting obvious negative bias and complain, but the skeptic editors organize and collaborate to reject all complaints and any narrative but their own. There are thousands of quotes like the ones sampled below.

Deepak Chopra, MD: Dr. Chopra has been a frequent target for skeptics, several of them proclaiming that their number one goal was to "ensure anyone coming to his page cannot walk away without thinking he's a quack." The double standard is so pronounced that blog entries

are allowed as medical citations if they condemn Chopra, but peer-reviewed studies by Nobel Laureates are banned if they support his ideas.

- 1.1. **[BIAS COMPLAINT after skeptic editor removed all mention of Chopra's recent activities]**
[User:Alexbrn](#) *has removed referenced information* about Deepak Chopra's partnership with the City of [Beverly Hills](#) as "undue", and they suggest the mere mention of the app could be undue, too. I disagree. I think the content should be restored--we need to update the article with Chopra's current activities like this one. [Zigzig20s](#) ([talk](#)) 13:13, 31 March 2017 (UTC)
- 1.1.1. **[COMPLAINT REJECTED by skeptic editor, explaining non-negative content is unacceptable]** Undue, yes. And smells spammy - this article has had trouble with promotional content before. I notice [Jiyo](#) has been redirected here too. [Alexbrn](#) ([talk](#)) 14:32, 31 March 2017 (UTC)
- 1.1.2. **[COMPLAINT REJECTED by skeptic editor, actively trying to suppress news about Chopra's biography if it might help him]** The thought of Wikipedia promoting Chopra's app is deeply disturbing. -[Roxy the dog. bark](#) 18:03, 31 March 2017 (UTC)
- 1.1.3. **[COMPLAINT REJECTED by skeptic editor, deciding to suppress information they personally dislike]** See [WP:FART](#). This is an encyclopedia. Is anybody going to care about this app in three years? Don't know? Great then leave it out for now. Said another way, there are roughly 2.5 million apps in google play and also in itunes. Why is it worth talking about this one in WP? Other than [WP:FANCRUFT](#)? [Jytdog](#) ([talk](#)) 00:11, 1 April 2017 (UTC)
- 1.2. **[[Omkar khalipe](#) ([talk](#)) 02:19, 17 March 2018 (UTC)] PROPOSED LIMITING NEGATIVE CONTENT TO A "CRITICISM" SECTION RATHER THAN DEDICATING THE ENTIRE BIOGRAPHY TO SOLELY NEGATIVE COVERAGE**
 - 1.2.1. **[PROPOSAL REJECTED, citing completely unrelated policies]** Welcome to Wikipedia. Your proposal is inappropriate on many levels, violating [WP:LEDE](#) and [WP:STRUCTURE](#) to start. -[Ronz](#) ([talk](#)) 15:54, 25 March 2018 (UTC)
 - 1.2.2. **[PROPOSAL REJECTED, USER THREATENED IF HE PERSISTS]** Funnily enough that very change was later made, and edit warred over, by another new account,[\[1\]](#) which had put in some exceedingly trivial edits, seemingly to achieve autoconfirmed status. I have inquired of a CU. [Bishonen](#) | [talk](#) 17:39, 25 March 2018 (UTC).
 - 1.2.3. **[PROPOSAL REJECTED, USER BANNED FROM WIKIPEDIA]** On a closer look, never mind bothering a CU. Sock and master blocked per [WP:DUCK](#). [Bishonen](#) | [talk](#) 18:24, 25 March 2018 (UTC).
- 1.3. **[BIAS COMPLAINT, pointing out most of the criticism is from blogs that are supposedly banned on Wikipedia]**The criticism does not fit with neutrality standards. - Removed reference to blogger. Read the about him page @ <https://respectfulinsolence.com/who-is-orac/>. Hardly a valid source for a living person. - Added Dubious tags on two references that don't match up with their claim, let's discuss. [EricAhlgvistScott](#) ([talk](#)) 20:19, 4 April 2018 (UTC)
 - 1.3.1. **[COMPLAINT REJECTED, skeptic editor claims skeptical viewpoints are above normal Wikipedia rules on neutrality and verifiability]** "Neutrality standards" probably don't mean what you think they do. It's a reliable source for skeptical viewpoints, especially when it comes to questionable medical claims outside regular evidence-based medicine. Have you reviewed the past discussions yet? --[Ronz](#) ([talk](#)) 21:44, 4 April 2018 (UTC)
- 1.4. **[BIAS COMPLAINT that skeptics are applying an impossible double standard (MEDRS, or reliable medical sources) of requiring proof of a negative in order to say anything positive**

about Chopra] I can understand the necessity of parsing any of Chopra's medical claims through MEDRS, that's an appropriate application of policy, but claiming [WP:FRINGE](#) allows double standards for critical content is inaccurate. [WP:MEDRS](#) takes precedence over [WP:FRINGE](#) here, since the former is purely science driven and the latter has an element of opinion (*what* counts as FRINGE?), and [WP:BLP](#) mandates the top priority of a BLP is to be objective and avoid contentiousness. That can only be accomplished through holding to the most objective and incontrovertible standards. If we apply MEDRS to Chopra's medical positions, we have to apply them to his medical critiques. [the Cap'n](#) ^{Hail me!} 19:28, 10 March 2016 (UTC)

- 1.4.1. **[COMPLAINT REJECTED with the unsupported assertion that anything deemed “fringe” is beyond normal rules]** Such statements appear to be opposite of FRINGE and related general consensus. --[Ronz](#) (talk) 23:41, 10 March 2016 (UTC)
- 1.5. **[BIAS COMPLAINT APPEAL, asking that all sources be held to a high standard]** BLP policy dictates fair, unbiased coverage with an eye to avoiding contentiousness. It seems to me the best way to do that is to only use reliable medical sources when discussing contentious medical issues. What do you disagree with about that? [the Cap'n](#) ^{Hail me!} 01:16, 11 March 2016 (UTC)
 - 1.5.1. **[APPEAL REJECTED, citing a skeptic-authored essay and implying the user could be banned for violating the COI policy by complaining]** You appear to be ignoring [Wikipedia:Fringe theories#Identifying fringe theories](#) to start. I again recommend you follow WP:COI more closely. --[Ronz](#) (talk) 17:20, 11 March 2016 (UTC)
- 1.6. **[BIAS COMPLAINT that a literature magazine was being used by skeptics as proof that Chopra’s approaches are medically ineffective]** My gut says that as a literary review publication, it is not a reliable source for non-literary medical topics. [SueDonem](#) (talk) 23:26, 8 March 2016 (UTC) Per our discussion, I marked the source as questionable for this particular invocation. [SueDonem](#) (talk) 23:37, 8 March 2016 (UTC)
 - 1.6.1. **[COMPLAINT REJECTED, declaring accurate sources are not necessary if the editor disagrees with the subject]** Seems fine given that this we're dealing with fringe medical claims here, not actual medicine. --[Ronz](#) (talk) 18:23, 9 March 2016 (UTC)
- 1.7. **[PROPOSED EDIT asking best place to include peer-reviewed scientific study done with Chopra & a Nobel Laureate that supports Chopra’s approaches]** ...SUGGESTED VERSION A recent study published by Nature's Translational Psychiatry supports Chopra's argument for the biological benefits of meditation and relaxation. Nobel Laureate Elizabeth Blackburn and a team of Harvard Medical and ICAHN scientists compared Chopra's meditation program to vacationing. While both were beneficial, meditation provided greater benefits including an increase in telomerase activity. [User Talk:PollyStyrene](#) 15:38, 7 September 2016 (PST)
 - 1.7.1. **[PROPOSAL REJECTED, declaring the study cannot relate to Chopra because it is reputable, and they consider him, by definition, disreputable]** Nowhere. You have registered an account, made the exact number of edits required for autoconfirmed status so you can edit the article, and then immediately promoted a study funded by Chopra that you state (amazingly!) vindicates his beliefs, but which actually doesn't, because there's nothing remotely alternative about this stuff. [WP:DUCK](#). Go back to your boss and tell him we weren't born yesterday. [Guy](#) (Help!) 23:07, 7 September 2016 (UTC)
 - 1.7.2. **[APPEAL FOR PROPOSAL REJECTED, the skeptic admin claiming the journal is not reliable enough (it is one of the most prestigious science journals on Earth)]** No thanks. You don't

understand science well enough to realise that something published in a journal is not *by* that journal, Nature has in the past published some egregious nonsense and this is not Nature, it's one of its less notable satellite journals. Getting \$MARKETNGCLAIM published sometimes rises to the level of importance, but not when the rest of the sources in the article are usually much stronger and certainly not when the finding is merely trying to claim credit for something that everybody already knew long before Chopra jumped on the bandwagon. [Guy \(Help!\)](#) 21:41, 12 September 2016 (UTC)

- 1.7.3. [APPEAL FOR PROPOSAL REJECTED, the skeptic editor mocking the Nobel Laureate and declaring he knows more about gene science than she does. She won the Nobel for her work in genetics)] the marketing here is hilarious - like [this Huffpo piece](#) - the big picture of Blackburn wearing her Nobel medal, the other two big pictures, the content about "Not long ago the very idea that behavior could have lasting effects on genetic expressions was nearly heretical in scientific circles....Today science agrees that genes can be influenced, while meditation could potentially be one of the most powerful methods of doing so." oh yes, influence those genes so we can see their expressions. word salad for pete's sake. What else.. The paper is [PMID 27576169](#) and is open access, so it's [here](#), with supplementary information [here](#). Ok, so Blackburn and Tanzi are middle authors. Blood draws were day 1 and day 5 so any claims about long term changes in gene expression based on this paper are baloney. [Jytdog \(talk\)](#) 04:22, 19 September 2016 (UTC)

Gary Null: A prominent proponent of alternative medicine and critic of mainstream health approaches, Null's Wikipedia biography is intensely negative. Nearly every sentence is hostile, defamatory, and defended as such by the skeptic editors who have insisted on a monopoly on writing his biography.

1. **[BIAS COMPLAINT that Null was being blamed for malfeasance that occurred a decade after he left a university]** We previously had a [discussion about this](#), now archived, but the issue has returned. Should we be saying that Union Institute was "subject to sanctions for failing to meet minimal academic standards" when that happened over a decade after he attended? We have no reason to believe that the issues that led to the sanctions were present at the time when Null was studying there, so it appears to be a case of [WP:SYNTH](#).... [Bilby \(talk\)](#) 09:16, 22 October 2019 (UTC)
 - 1.1. **[COMPLAINT REJECTED, the skeptic admin claiming the source for the accusation (a blogger) is a famous skeptic and thus must be accepted. Blogs are considered unacceptable on Wikipedia. Further, the editor directly states that THE ACCUSATION MUST REMAIN BECAUSE IT DAMAGES NULL'S REPUTATION]** The source for the Union criticism specifically addresses Null's qualifications. There are no reliable sources presented which counter this narrative, and one additional RS supporting it. The source is one of the most prominent and respected investigators of alternative health claims. The only question, then, is whether mentioning the criticism of his qualifications by Barratt amounts to [WP:UNDUE](#). I think it does not, because Null relies so heavily on his credential in his marketing that it is a legitimate focus of scrutiny. I can state from personal experience that his supporters obsessively use his doctoral title, including in legal threats. [Guy \(help!\)](#) 10:22, 22 October 2019 (UTC)
 - 1.2. **[COMPLAINT APPEALED, explaining that Biographies of Living Persons (BLPs) are supposed to be fair, unbiased, and nonhostile]** That's not how we work. This is a BLP, and we need to maintain core standards as applied to all BLPs. - [Bilby \(talk\)](#)

- 1.3. **[APPEAL REJECTED, the skeptic admin insisting that only the skeptic blogger can be cited, but not any rebuttals of his claims, in part because the admin “knows” Null is a bogus quack]**
Read the above. "It says X", "that looks wrong", basically. We currently represent, accurately, Barratt's analysis. The Null social media campaign wants it removed. People are arguing to remove the specifics because "it doesn't look right". The conclusion: We are being asked to remove part of Barratt's argument because Null's PR is saying that a subsequent restriction is irrelevant to Null's "doctorate", which they obsessively use in order to assert that his bogus advice is somehow not bogus. He's selling quack remedies, and he claims a PhD but it's in "Interdisciplinary Studies" (thesis title: "A Study of Psychological and Physiological Effects of Caffeine on Human Health") from a correspondence college whose accredited doctorate degrees specialise in education, leadership, humanities, and public policy.^[1] [Guy \(help!\)](#) 22:53, 22 October 2019 (UTC)
2. **[BIAS COMPLAINT that an openly, militantly skeptic blog is being used as a formal, medical source to defame Null]** Technically, it is partisan and self published. Or at least it was self published in 2004, when the Gary Null content was added. It remains listed on [WP:RSP](#) as a source to use with caution. - [Bilby \(talk\)](#) 14:25, 24 August 2019 (UTC)
 - 2.1. **[COMPLAINT REJECTED, the skeptic editor insisting the blog is acceptable due to the frequency with which skeptic editors cite it]** Quackwatch has always been considered a reliable source, so I have restored the information, which is relevant to Null's qualifications. Another source would be good, but only as additional support, the current source is quite sufficient. [Beyond My Ken \(talk\)](#) 17:41, 24 August 2019 (UTC)
 - 2.2. **[COMPLAINT REJECTED, the skeptic editor including a link to skeptic activist and Null's opponent David Gorski for examples of content to use against Null]** I recommend that editors read [David Gorski's](#) analysis of Null and his tactics [here](#). [Cullen](#)³²⁸ [Let's discuss it](#) 21:37, 24 August 2019 (UTC)