Top Misinformation Article Attributed to Chicago Tribune

Analysis by Dr. Joseph Mercola ✔ Fact Checked

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- According to Facebook's content transparency report for the first quarter of 2021, the most popular article shared on the platform between January 2021 and March 2021 was about a 56-year-old Miami, Florida, obstetrician who died two weeks after his first Pfizer injection
- When something goes viral, the total number of views is still a tiny fraction of the overall content. Even the biggest accounts make up but a small portion of overall content views. Combined, the top 20 accounts with the most views during the first quarter accounted for only 1.18% of all U.S. content views
- According to Monika Bickert, vice president of Facebook content policy, the "Disinformation Dozen" identified by the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH) are responsible for just 0.05% of all views of vaccine-related content on Facebook, which is 1,460 times lower than CCDH's outrageous claim of 73%
- There are 84,700 Google search results for CCDH's defamatory phrase "disinformation dozen," including 16,000 news stories in the international press, nearly all of which parrot the CCDH's defamatory statements verbatim and report them as fact
- According to Bickert, the CCDH created a "faulty narrative" based on "a narrow set of 483 pieces of content over six weeks from only 30 groups," which "are in no way representative of the hundreds of millions of posts that people have shared about COVID-19 vaccines in the past months on Facebook." There's also no rational explanation for how the CCDH identified content as "anti-vax" or what criteria they used to select the 30 groups

According to Facebook's content transparency report for the first quarter of 2021, released in mid-August 2021, the most popular article shared on the platform between January 2021 and March 2021 was about a 56-year-old Miami, Florida, obstetrician who died two weeks after his first Pfizer injection.[1]

The story initially ran in the South Florida Sun Sentinel[2] April 8, 2021, and was republished by the Chicago Tribune that same day.[3] The doctor, Dr. Gregory Michael, received his first dose December 18, 2020.

Three days later, he developed small spots on his hands and feet, which prompted him to go to the emergency room, where they found he had an abnormally low blood count. Platelets stop bleeding by clotting, and when platelets drop too low, internal bleeding can occur, resulting in what looks like blood blisters on the skin.

Michael remained in intensive care for two weeks, but no matter what they did, his platelet count refused to budge. During the night of January 3, 2021, he died of a massive stroke. According to the coroner, the COVID injection could not be ruled out as a contributing or causative factor.

In a Facebook post, Michael's widow stated he'd been "very healthy" and that he'd been a COVID-19 vaccine advocate. His death caused her to question the safety of the shot, however.

"I believe that people should be aware that side effects can happen, that the vaccine is not good for everyone and in this case destroyed a beautiful life, a perfect family and has affected so many people in this community." she wrote. "Please do not let his death be in vain please save more lives my making this information news."[4]

Even Viral Content Has Minor Reach

According to The New York Times,[5] Facebook held off on publishing the first-quarter report for fear the findings might "look bad for the company." Executives decided they wanted to make some "key fixes to the system" before releasing it. That's why it wasn't published until August.

Interestingly, the report reveals that even when something goes viral, the total number of views is still a tiny fraction of the overall content. Even the biggest accounts make up but a small portion of overall content views. Combined, the top 20 accounts with the most views during the first quarter — which included UNICEF, The Dodo and LADbible — accounted for only 1.18% of all U.S. content views.

As noted in the report, this "shows that, even though it may seem like a page or post has extensive reach on the platform, that isn't the case when measured against the total amount of content available on the platform."

Facebook Calls Out CCDH for Manufacturing 'Faulty Narrative'

As you may know, an obscure one-man organization funded by dark money called the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH) has published several reports, including "The Anti-Vaxx Playbook,"[6] "The Disinformation Dozen"[7] and "Disinformation Dozen: The Sequel,"[8] in which the founder, Imran Ahmed — an unregistered foreign agent — claims to have identified the top most influential "anti-vaxxers" in the U.S.

In a completely unexpected turn of events, Facebook is now calling out the CCDH for having manufactured a faulty narrative without evidence against the 12 individuals targeted in its reports (myself included).[9]

This is important, seeing how the CCDH reports have been the primary "reference" source of authority used by media and government officials to smear, threaten and infringe on American citizens' right to free speech.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security even lists promulgating "false narratives" around COVID-19 as a top national security threat, which basically puts a "domestic terrorist" target on the backs of those of us who have been identified by the CCDH as the most prolific "superspreaders" of COVID misinformation.

> **"[The 'Disinformation Dozen'] are responsible for about just 0.05% of all views of vaccine-related content on Facebook. This includes all vaccine-related posts they've shared, whether true or false, as well as URLs associated with these people. ~ Monika Bickert, vice president of Facebook content policy"**

As reported by GreenMed Info:[10]

> *"Google now shows an astounding 84,700 search results for CCDH's defamatory phrase 'disinformation dozen. 'Amazingly, this includes 16,000 news stories within the international press, approximately 100% of which are word-for-word amplifications of CCDH's claims/defamatory statements and reported uncritically as fact.*
>
> *In addition, the Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, the White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki, and president Biden all used CCDH's report as the sole source for their own defamatory accusations, reaching a dangerous rhetorical climax on July 20th when Biden stated that these 12 individuals are literally "killing people" [by spreading misinformation]."*

No Evidence to Support 'Misinfo Superspreader' Claim

In an August 18, 2021, Facebook report, Monika Bickert, vice president of Facebook content policy, sets the record straight, and in the process, demolishes the CCDH's claims:[11]

> *"In recent weeks, there has been a debate about whether the global problem of COVID-19 vaccine misinformation can be solved simply by removing 12 people from social media platforms. People who have advanced this narrative contend that these 12 people are responsible for 73% of online vaccine misinformation on Facebook. There isn't any evidence to support this claim …*
>
> *That said, any amount of COVID-19 vaccine misinformation that violates our policies is too much by our standards — and we have removed over three dozen Pages, groups and Facebook or Instagram accounts linked to these 12 people, including at least one linked to each of the 12 people, for violating our policies.*
>
> *We have also imposed penalties on nearly two dozen additional Pages, groups or accounts linked to these 12 people, like moving their posts lower in News Feed so fewer people see them or not recommending them to others. We've applied penalties to some of their website domains as well so any posts including their website content are moved lower in News Feed.*
>
> *The remaining accounts associated with these individuals are not posting content that breaks our rules, have only posted a small amount of violating content, which we've removed, or are simply inactive.*
>
> *In fact, these 12 people are responsible for about just 0.05% of all views of vaccine-related content on Facebook. This includes all vaccine-related posts they've shared, whether true or false, as well as URLs associated with these people."*

It's worth restating the key point in this quote: Combined, the top 12 individuals and organizations identified by the CCDH as being responsible for a whopping 73% of vaccine misinformation on Facebook, are in fact only responsible for 0.05% of vaccine-related content — 1,460 times lower than the CCDH's outrageous claim. That's no small discrepancy.

CCDH Claims Blasted as Unjustified and Biased

Bickert goes on to refer directly to the CCDH report "The Disinformation Dozen,"[12] stating:

> *"The report[13] upon which the faulty narrative is based analyzed only a narrow set of 483 pieces of content over six weeks from only 30 groups, some of which are as small as 2,500 users.*
>
> *They are in no way representative of the hundreds of millions of posts that people have shared about COVID-19 vaccines in the past months on Facebook.*
>
> *Further, there is no explanation for how the organization behind the report identified the content they describe as 'anti-vax' or how they chose the 30 groups they included in their analysis. There is no justification for their claim that their data constitute a 'representative sample' of the content shared across our apps."*

CCDH Meets Definition of 'Hateful Extremists'

Ironically, while the CCDH claims to "counter hate" online, and Ahmed sits on the Steering Committee of the U.K. Commission on Countering Extremism, CCDH itself actually meets the Commission's definition of hateful extremists.[14] In the 2019 Commission document, "Challenging Hateful Extremism," the term is defined as:[15]

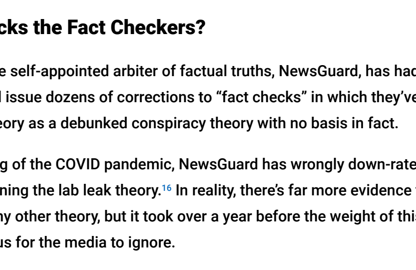
> *"Behaviours that can incite and amplify hate, or engage in persistent hatred, or equivocate about and make the moral case for violence; And that draw on hateful, hostile or supremacist beliefs directed at an out-group who are perceived as a threat to the wellbeing, survival or success of an in-group; And that cause, or are likely to cause, harm to individuals, communities or wider society."*

In addition, in the forward of the report, lead commissioner Sara Khan notes that "Hateful extremists seek to restrict individual liberties and curtail the fundamental freedoms that define our country."

All of these definitions and clarifications of what hateful extremism is fit the CCDH to a T. Ahmed manufactured data to create a false narrative that 12 individuals pose a threat to the well-being and survival of the whole world, and then used that narrative to incite hate against us and curtail our freedom of speech.

Josh Hawley ✔ @HawleyMO

For days now, the Biden's Administration has said 12 people are "guilty" of spreading #COVID19 "misinformation" on social media. Who compiled this list for them? The Center for Countering Digital Hate. A foreign dark money group



Majority of Covid misinformation came from 12 people, report finds
CCDH finds 'disinformation dozen' have combined following of 59 million people across multiple social media platforms
theguardian.com

10:11 AM · Jul 20, 2021

Who Fact Checks the Fact Checkers?

In related news, the self-appointed arbiter of factual truths, NewsGuard, has had to backpedal in recent months and issue dozens of corrections to "fact checks" in which they've labeled the Wuhan lab leak theory as a debunked conspiracy theory with no basis in fact.

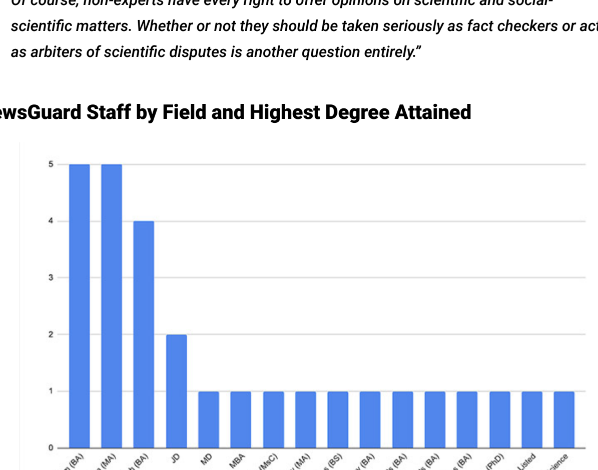
Since the beginning of the COVID pandemic, NewsGuard has wrongly down-rated 225 websites for articles mentioning the lab leak theory.[16] In reality, there's far more evidence to support the lab leak theory than any other theory, but it took over a year before the weight of this evidence became too obvious for the media to ignore.

NewsGuard's erroneous fact checks were recently highlighted in an August 11, 2021, report by the American Institute for Economic Research (AIER).[17]

AIER decided to take a closer look at NewsGuard after receiving a request for comments on a NewsGuard fact check article regarding AIER and the Great Barrington Declaration — a statement written by public health experts from Harvard, Stanford and Oxford that calls on government to implement focused protection rather than lockdowns and self-isolation. AIERS investigation found that:[18]

> *"… NewsGuard falls far short of the very same criteria for accuracy and transparency that it claims to apply to other websites. Most of the company's fact checkers lack basic qualifications in the scientific and social-scientific fields that they purport to arbitrate.*
>
> *NewsGuard's own track record of commentary — particularly on the Covid-19 pandemic — reveals a pattern of unreliable and misleading claims that required subsequent corrections, and analysis that regularly conflates fact with opinion journalism in rendering a judgement on a website's content.*
>
> *Furthermore, the company's own practices fall far short of the transparency and disclosure standards it regularly applies to other websites … NewsGuard's staff primarily evaluates scientific claims by appealing to the authority of public figures who they designate as 'experts' on the subject in question.*
>
> *Their approach generally avoids direct examination of the evidence surrounding contested claims, and instead cherry-picks a figure to treat as an authoritative final word … many of their preferred authorities are political officeholders rather than persons trained in scientific or social-scientific methods.*
>
> *By selectively curating cherry-picked political authorities rather than evaluating evidence directly, NewsGuard's approach to fact-checking effectively sidesteps the scientific method. This strategy is rendered even more problematic by the general lack of scientific expertise within NewsGuard's team of writers.*
>
> *We examined the educational credentials, including the highest degree listed, for 28 publicly identified staff members on NewsGuard's website. The company's staff page reveals shockingly little expertise in either the hard sciences such as medicine or social sciences such as public policy, economics, and related fields …*
>
> *Most NewsGuard articles on Covid-19 topics and policies are written by [NewsGuard Deputy Editor for Health, John] Gregory, whose only identified qualification is a bachelor's degree in Media Arts … Gregory would not qualify as an expert in most of the fields he is responsible for fact-checking …*
>
> *Of course, non-experts have every right to offer opinions on scientific and social-scientific matters. Whether or not they should be taken seriously as fact checkers or act as arbiters of scientific disputes is another question entirely."*

NewsGuard Staff by Field and Highest Degree Attained



NewsGuard Apologizes for Erroneous Fact Checks

After being confronted about its erroneous fact checks on the lab leak theory, NewsGuard offered the following apology in a statement sent to AIER:[19]

> *"NewsGuard either mischaracterized the sites' claims about the lab leak theory, referred to the lab leak as a 'conspiracy theory,' or wrongly grouped together unproven claims about the lab leak with the separate, false claim that the COVID-19 virus was man-made without explaining that one claim was unsubstantiated, and the other was false.*
>
> *NewsGuard apologizes for these errors. We have made the appropriate correction on each of the 21 labels."*

AIER commented on the apology:[20]

> *"Gregory and his colleagues appear to have simply decided that their own premature dismissal of the lab leak hypothesis equated to 'fact' and proceeded to penalize other sites not for factual errors, but rather for diverging from NewsGuard's own editorial position on the same subject.*
>
> *When this position turned out to be mistaken, NewsGuard pivoted to remove the errors — albeit in non-transparent ways that downplay the significance or pervasiveness of their mistake."*

NewsGuard Fails to Fulfill Its Own Credibility Criteria

In their report, AIER goes on to apply the criteria NewsGuard uses to evaluate a website's credibility to NewsGuard itself. It's ranking? A paltry 36.25 out of 100. According to AIER:[21]

> *"This website fails to adhere to several basic journalistic standards, and should be used with extreme caution as a source for verifying the reliability of the websites it purports to rate …*
>
> *When we see fact checkers like NewsGuard, who not only fail to uphold their high-sounding principles but even publicly encourage working with the government to suppress speech, we should raise red flags."*

The NewsGuard ratings are meant to influence the reader, instructing them to disregard content with cautionary colors and cautions. That it would serve as the thought police of the technocratic establishment that seeks to silence dissent and bury information that doesn't help move the Great Reset agenda forward is no surprise.

Especially considering its primary startup capital came from Publicis Groupe,[22] a PR group that represents most of Big Pharma, including vaccine makers, and Big Tech. NewsGuard is also backed by Microsoft[23] and Google.

The Publicis Groupe has been manipulating what people think about commercial products for nearly a century. Over that century, this advertising and communications firm bought or partnered with targeted advertising avenues, beginning with newspapers, followed by radio, TV, cinema and the internet.

With revenue avenues secured, Publicis' clients and partners built a global presence that dominated the advertising world. Be it tobacco or sugar, Publicis Groupe found a way to promote and strengthen big industries. Publicis was recently sued[24] for its deadly and illegal marketing of Purdue Pharma's opioid products.

When you consider that Publicis describes its business model approach as putting clients and their needs and objectives at the center of all they do so their clients can "win and grow," it's easy to see what's driving NewsGuard.

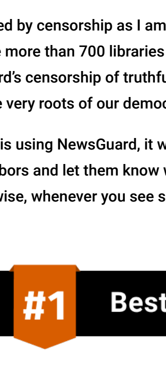
Overall, NewsGuard is just another big business aimed at keeping the chemical, drug and food industries, as well as mainstream media, intact by discrediting and eliminating unwanted competitors and analysts who empower you with information that runs counter to any given industry's agenda.

If you're as disturbed by censorship as I am, be sure to contact your local library today to find out if they're one of the more than 700 libraries using NewsGuard. If they are, then ask them if they're aware of NewsGuard's censorship of truthful news that is now encroaching on scientific freedom and threatening the very roots of our democracy.

If your local library is using NewsGuard, it would be helpful to start a campaign to get it removed. Contact your neighbors and let them know what is happening so they can kick out this public health threat. Likewise, whenever you see someone referencing reports by the CCDH, call them out on it.

#1 Best Seller In Books

My latest book, **"The Truth About COVID-19,"** is an instant best seller. With hundreds of thousands of copies sold, it has a nearly perfect 5-star rating so grab your copy of the #1 best-selling book on Amazon today before Biden bans it.



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by Doctor Joseph Mercola

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