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National Post
365 Bloor St. East, 3rd Floor
Toronto, Ontario
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To: Kevin Libin, Editor NP Comment

Anne Marie Owens, Editor

Re: Quan Misses the Mark

Dear Mr. Libin and Ms. Owens

I am writing in response to the article by National Post columnist, Douglas Quan – '[UBC journal retraction raises controversial question: Can an activist be a scientist?](#)' (National Post, November 1, 2017)

While this article is more balanced than what the National Post typically offers when the topic is vaccine safety and effectiveness, it still fails on a number of significant issues.

Use of Term - Anti-Vaccine

Firstly, Quan uses or allow others to use the term “anti-vaccine”, “anti-vaxx”, and “anti-vaccine movement”. These terms are referred to six times in the article. These terms are derogatory and a distortion of the real issue. Labeling individuals who examine vaccine safety as anti-vaccine is dishonest and disrespectful and needs to stop.

Quan would be wise to consider the advice of Dr. Peter Doshi, Associate Editor for the British Medical Journal (BMJ) who made the following statements about good journalism as pertains to vaccinations:

Approaches that label anybody and everybody who raises questions about the right headedness of current vaccine policies as “anti-vaccine” fail on several accounts.

The label (or its derogatory derivative “anti-vaxxer”) is a form of attack. It stigmatizes the mere act of even asking an open question about what is known and unknown about the safety of vaccines.

... the label too quickly assumes that there are “two sides” to every question, and that the “two sides” are polar opposites. This “you’re either with us or against us” thinking is unfit for medicine.

Contrary to the suggestion — generally implicit — that vaccines are risk free (and therefore why would anyone ever resist official recommendations), the reality is that officially sanctioned written medical information on vaccines is — just like drugs — filled with information about common, uncommon, and unconfirmed but possible harms.

Medical journalists have an obligation to the truth. ... It’s time to listen—seriously and respectfully ... not demonize them.

Conflict of Interest

Second, while Quan was vigilant in identifying the funding source for some of Shaw’s research and questioning the potential for bias, a similar level of journalistic investigation was not used to disclose the financial interests of quoted vaccine safety science critic David Gorski.

It appears that those critical of researchers investigating vaccine safety are given a pass when it comes to disclosing their bias and conflict of interest.

Aluminum is a Neurotoxin

What is even more disconcerting is that Quan completely ignores the impact of Shaw’s research and that of other scientists who have identified evidence of the neurotoxic effects of aluminum.

The neurotoxicity of aluminum is well documented. Aluminum affects memory, cognition, psychomotor control and causes damage to the brain. Aluminum interferes with gene expression and depresses mitochondrial function.

A June 2014 Pubmed abstract states:

“Aluminium is neurotoxic. Its free ion, Al(3+) (aq), is highly biologically reactive and uniquely equipped to do damage to essential cellular (neuronal) biochemistry. This unequivocal fact must be the starting point in examining the risk posed by aluminium as a neurotoxin in humans. Aluminium is present in the human brain and it accumulates with age. The most recent research demonstrates that a significant proportion of individuals older than 70 years of age have a potentially pathological

accumulation of aluminium somewhere in their brain. What are the symptoms of chronic aluminium intoxication in humans? What if neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's disease are the manifestation of the risk of aluminum as a neurotoxin? How might such an hypothesis be tested?"

(<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24779346>)

Shaw's work of investigating the effect of aluminum in vaccines seems a natural and important area of research given the dramatic increase in Alzheimer's disease in our society today, and the fact that the amount of aluminum in many vaccines exceeds the maximum amount permitted by the FDA.

We also know that mercury and aluminum work synergistically such that their impact is substantially more toxic when given together. Both mercury and aluminum can be present in vaccines and cause permanent neurological damage in children and adults.

What Quan seems unaware is that most vaccine safety trials use other vaccinated populations or placebos containing aluminum as the control group. Neither of these are neutral placebos. In fact, not a single one of the clinical trials for vaccines given to babies and toddlers had a control group receiving a neutral placebo.

Vaccine safety trials that are conducted without a neutral placebo cannot determine if a product is safe. This is not good science. This is not ethical science. This is not responsible science. In fact, this is not science.

There is increasing awareness about the absence of clinical evidence of the long-term effects of aluminum and other toxins in vaccines. According to the Journal of American Physicians and Surgeons (Summer 2016) –

"The safety of CDC's childhood vaccination schedule was never affirmed in clinical studies. Health authorities have no scientific data from synergistic toxicity studies on all combinations of vaccines that infants are likely to receive. National vaccination campaigns must be supported by scientific evidence. No child should be subjected to a health policy that is not based on sound scientific principles and, in fact, has been shown to be potentially dangerous."

Yet, from Quan's perspective, Shaw's activist interests are more a subject of concern than the health of our infants and children and the safety of vaccines.

Making It Personal

Finally, Quan has missed the most important area of concern – the personal attacks on scientist engaged in evaluating vaccine safety. Instead of focusing his attention on the mounting evidence of aluminum toxicity, Quan makes his essay about Shaw and thereby adds to the attack on Shaw as an individual.

Quan implies that Shaw is some kind of rebel or renegade who ought not to be taken seriously as a scientist because of his activism. Why else ask the question – ‘Can an activist be a scientist?’

It appears that Quan’s intention in writing the article is to discredit Shaw’s vaccine research, not based on the science, but because he is active on controversial issues in his community. Why else include a picture of Shaw protesting the Vancouver Olympic Games?

I suggest the more important issue that Quan acknowledged but absolutely glossed over is the efforts of the pharmaceutical industry and mainstream media to silence and discredit any Doctor, scientist, or researcher who dares to threaten their profits.

Vaccination has become politicized such that honest research or debate is no longer permitted. The active censorship of concern about vaccine safety, effectiveness and necessity eliminates an important safeguard and increases our vulnerability to being harmed. This should concern us all.

The Alliance for Human Research Protection is very clear in their concern for the corrupting influence of the pharmaceutical industry on medical research:

“Public health officials and the medical profession have abrogated their professional, public, and human responsibility, by failing to honestly examine the iatrogenic harm caused by expansive, indiscriminate, and increasingly aggressive vaccination policies.

On a human level, the documented evidence shows a callous disregard for the plight of thousands of children who suffer irreversible harm, as if they were unavoidable “collateral damage”.

The corrupting influence of the pharmaceutical industry on medical research and its published literature, has derailed the medical profession from its humanitarian mission and its professional objectivity.”

Pure Science Should Be a Method of Uncovering Facts

Pure science should be a method of uncovering facts. However, much of the research on vaccines is not in discovery of the truth, but rather is in support of a prescribed agenda – selling vaccines. Vaccine science is all too often marketing propaganda masquerading as science.

Despite its ideals of objectivity, neutrality and collective benefit, the practice of science has become flawed with bias, prejudice and self-interest. When unchecked, these biases influence funding decisions, who or what is studied, and who benefits from the results of scientific research.

Real science is a noble venture, a quest for understanding through the evaluation of evidence. Science does not operate by consensus or belief. Science is never “settled”. To state -“the science is settled” means they’ve abandoned science. Genuine science welcomes challenges and debate.

Most safety trials are either conducted by the vaccine manufacturers or financed by the pharmaceutical industry. The pharmaceutical industry routinely withholds research results that fail to provide the outcome they desire. As a result the public are only made aware of research results that support the use of an industry product. This is not true science. This is not ethical science. This is marketing masquerading as science.

In my mind, Shaw is a fine example of a pure scientist. He allows the data to speak for itself - *“If you look at my published stuff, there’s been negative results, positive results and ambiguous results. We publish whatever there is.”* This honesty and transparency is rare in industry-funded vaccine research.

Too Difficult to Bear

The most disturbing aspect of this story is Quan’s concluding comments. As a result of the harassment directed personally at Shaw, *“Shaw says he will most likely start pulling away from vaccine research as the level of vitriol directed at his work has become too difficult to bear.”* *“Maybe this is an area that I’ll leave to other hands, because who needs this kind of grief in research, right?”*

Shaw is correct when he states: *“There is a pattern for industry to try and paint the scientists who do any studies that might be considered problematic for their product”.*

The harsh reality is scientists examining vaccine safety are routinely attacked because of their efforts to investigate the safety of vaccine ingredients. Rather than critiquing the science, authors of vaccine safety investigations report they are attacked personally. This statement is from the September 2017 edition of Vaccine:

“Recently, the authors of many vaccine safety investigations are being personally criticized rather than the actual science being methodologically assessed and critiqued. Unfortunately, this could result in making vaccine safety science a “hazardous occupation”.

Critiques should focus on the science and not on the authors and on the scientists that publish reasonably high-quality science suggesting a problem with a given vaccine.

These scientists require adequate professional protection so there are not disincentives to publish and to carry out researches in the field. The issues for vaccine safety are not dissimilar to other areas such as medical errors and drug safety.” (Debate on Vaccines and Autoimmunity: Do Not Attack the Author, Yet Discuss It Methodologically. NL Bragazzi et al. Vaccine. 2017 Sep 04).

These attacks send a chilling message to scientists and researchers that vaccines safety and effectiveness is not to be investigated or even questioned. They state this aggression makes vaccine safety science a “hazardous occupation”.

Quan either naively or intentionally participates in the personal attack on Shaw. According to Alan Cassels, *“When drug companies and regulators stifle debate and won’t deal head on with serious concerns raised by researchers, science and medical progress is compromised.”* As is consumer safety.

These attacks are not unique to vaccine researchers. Doctors also report being challenged by their professional bodies or regulatory agencies when they question vaccine safety, report adverse events following vaccination, or write medical exemptions for their patients. The message is – “Don’t question vaccines.”

Not Unique to Vaccines

These attacks on scientists and researchers are not unique to vaccines. We witnessed these same tactics with other health and safety concerns including:

Smoking and lung cancer
Mercury in dental fillings
Fluoride in water
Lead in gasoline and paint
Food irradiation
DDT and other pesticides
GMOs
Vioxx, Thalidomide, Oxycontin

When our scientists and researchers no longer feel safe to conduct research to determine if a drug is safe for fear of reprisal from the industry and mainstream media, we all suffer.

Follow the Money

In politics if you want to find the truth the rule is: follow the money. Now it seems the same rule applies in science. Why is it that researchers finding evidence that aluminum, a known neurotoxin, causes heightened immune responses in mice, are attacked for publishing these findings?

The fact is, vaccines are a multi-billion dollar industry and therefore any attempt to bring their safety into question is swiftly denounced and the careers of scientists sabotaged.

I invite Quan to revisit these issues and commit his energies and talents to protecting our research scientists and institutions like UBC, and demand verifiable

evidence of vaccine safety and effectiveness. We would all benefit from this kind of reporting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ted Kuntz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "T" and "K".

Ted Kuntz, Parent of a Vaccine Injured Child

Cc.

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