

# Why Science Is Losing to Authoritarian Mass Murderers

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## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › During the pandemic, skepticism has been met with backlash and censorship, acts that have only further hindered science, which depends on healthy skepticism
- › John Ioannidis reported that by August 2021, 330,000 scientific papers had been published about COVID-19, written by about 1 million different people; the massive scientific involvement related to COVID-19 is unprecedented, but much of the work is fundamentally flawed
- › Social and mainstream media have played a role in deciding who is an “expert” and who is not, while those who questioned the “expert” data or asked for more evidence were vilified – a “dismissive, authoritarian approach ‘in defense of science.’”
- › The end result is an altered reality in which heavily conflicted corporations like Big Tech have emerged as regulators of society instead of being regulated themselves
- › The path to good science and the truth depends on continued scientific exploration, challenges and skepticism – all things that have been seen as anathema due to the authoritarian control that has taken over during the pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought out an unprecedented attack on science, which has accelerated flaws already apparent in the scientific method and published literature. Even prior to the pandemic, lack of transparency, conflicts of interest and bias were rampant in the scientific and academic communities, but a community had emerged to get back to scientific integrity and understand and minimize bias.

“One might therefore have hoped that the pandemic crisis could have fostered change,” wrote John Ioannidis, professor of medicine and professor of epidemiology and population health at Stanford University, in Tablet. “Indeed, change did happen — but perhaps mostly for the worst.”<sup>1</sup>

## **Skepticism Gets Caught Up in Political Warfare**

During the pandemic, skepticism has been met with backlash and censorship, acts that have only further hindered science. Healthy skepticism is a necessary part of science, but one that is often confused with denial.

While denial describes a belief that persists even when evidence to the contrary is overwhelming, skepticism, as reported by NASA, “allows scientists to reach logical conclusions supported by evidence that has been examined and confirmed by others in the same field, even when that evidence does not confirm absolute certainty.” They continue:<sup>2</sup>

*“Skepticism helps scientists to remain objective when performing scientific inquiry and research. It forces them to examine claims (their own and those of others) to be certain that there is sufficient evidence to back them up.*

*Skeptics do not doubt every claim, only those backed by insufficient evidence or by data that have been improperly collected, are not relevant or cannot support the rationale being made.”*

During the pandemic, skepticism has been regarded as the enemy and skeptics labeled as conspiracy theorists. Respected leaders in fields have been threatened with discipline and even loss of their licenses for questioning the official narrative.

In one example, Dr. Jeremy Henrichs, a member of the Mahomet-Seymour school board and a physician for the University of Illinois Athletic Department, was targeted by state investigators who said they had opened an official investigation due to his skepticism of mandatory masks in classrooms.<sup>3</sup>

The state agency later issued a letter of apology to Henrichs, backpedaling on their inquiry,<sup>4</sup> but many other “skeptics” have not been so lucky.

While healthy skepticism has become viewed as intolerable, the COVID-19 science cult – made “out of science, expertise, the university system, executive-branch ‘norms,’ the ‘intelligence community,’ the State Department, NGOs, the legacy news media, and the hierarchy of credentialed achievement in general”<sup>5</sup> – has been held as gospel during the pandemic.

Meanwhile, many credible reputations have been destroyed in the name of public health and the “war” against a virus:<sup>6</sup>

*“This is a dirty war, one without dignity. Opponents were threatened, abused, and bullied by cancel culture campaigns in social media, hit stories in mainstream media, and bestsellers written by zealots. Statements were distorted, turned into straw men, and ridiculed. Wikipedia pages were vandalized.*

*Reputations were systematically devastated and destroyed. Many brilliant scientists were abused and received threats during the pandemic, intended to make them and their families miserable.”*

## **Authoritarian Public Health Over Science**

“Science” has become a loaded word, one used as a basis for decisions that affect basic freedoms, life and death itself. However, as Ioannidis explained, science isn’t based on facts but interpretations, often in the context of political warfare:<sup>7</sup>

*“Organized skepticism was seen as a threat to public health. There was a clash between two schools of thought, authoritarian public health versus science – and science lost.*

*Honest, continuous questioning and exploration of alternative paths are indispensable for good science. In the authoritarian (as opposed to*

*participatory) version of public health, these activities were seen as treason and desertion.*

*The dominant narrative became that ‘we are at war.’ When at war, everyone has to follow orders. If a platoon is ordered to go right and some soldiers explore maneuvering to the left, they are shot as deserters. Scientific skepticism had to be shot, no questions asked. The orders were clear.”*

What’s less clear is who gave these “orders” that dissenters must be silenced. Dr. Peter McCullough, an internist, cardiologist and epidemiologist, has described it as a form of psychosis or a group neurosis.<sup>8</sup> Ioannidis also believes that some form of societal dysfunction has pushed groupthink ahead of science during the pandemic:<sup>9</sup>

*“It was not a single person, not a crazy general or a despicable politician or a dictator, even if political interference in science did happen – massively so.*

*It was all of us, a conglomerate that has no name and no face: a mesh and mess of half-cooked evidence; frenzied and partisan media promoting parachute journalism and pack coverage; the proliferation of pseudonymous and eponymous social media personas which led even serious scientists to become unrestrained, wild-beast avatars of themselves, spitting massive quantities of inanity and nonsense; poorly regulated industry and technology companies flexing their brain and marketing power; and common people afflicted by the protracted crisis.*

*All swim in a mixture of some good intentions, some excellent thinking, and some splendid scientific successes, but also of conflicts, political polarization, fear, panic, hatred, divisiveness, fake news, censorship, inequalities, racism, and chronic and acute societal dysfunction.”*

## **Lies Surround COVID-19 Origin**

One of the most heated scientific debates is whether COVID-19 originated in a laboratory or from a natural source. Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute

of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) – an arm of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) – has denied funding gain-of-function (GOF) research at China’s Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV), even though evidence shows he did.<sup>10</sup>

Speaking with Newsweek, Richard Ebright, board of governors professor of chemistry and chemical biology at Rutgers University and laboratory director at the Waksman Institute of Microbiology, said that documents released by a FOIA lawsuit show without doubt that grants from NIH were used to fund GOF research at WIV, and that Fauci lied about it:<sup>11</sup>

*“The documents make it clear that assertions by the NIH director, Francis Collins, and the NIAID director, Anthony Fauci, that the NIH did not support gain-of-function research or potential pandemic pathogen enhancement in Wuhan are untruthful.”*

Much of the controversial research was carried out by the nonprofit EcoHealth Alliance. Fauci told a House Appropriations subcommittee that more than \$600,000 was given to EcoHealth Alliance, which funneled the money to WIV, over a five-year period for the purpose of studying bat coronaviruses and whether they could be transmitted to humans.<sup>12,13</sup>

The FOIA documents, which were released by The Intercept,<sup>14</sup> reveal GOF research using humanized mice and coronaviruses. Ebright told The Intercept, “The viruses they constructed were tested for their ability to infect mice that were engineered to display human type receptors on their cell ... While they were working on SARS-related coronavirus, they were carrying out a parallel project at the same time on MERS-related coronavirus.”<sup>15</sup>

China has also refused to be transparent over what took place at WIV and other laboratories. “Opening the lab books of the Wuhan Institute of Virology would have alleviated concerns immediately. Without such openness about which experiments were done, lab leak theories remain tantalizingly credible,” Ioannidis said.<sup>16</sup>

The coverups to obstruct research into COVID-19’s origin have further eroded public trust in scientists,<sup>17</sup> the ramifications of which are likely to be felt long after the

pandemic.

“[I]f full public data-sharing cannot happen even for a question relevant to the deaths of millions and the suffering of billions, what hope is there for scientific transparency and a sharing culture?” Ioannidis added. “Whatever the origins of the virus, the refusal to abide by formerly accepted norms has done its own enormous damage.”<sup>18</sup>

If it turns out that SARS-CoV-2 did come from a lab, it’s the type of thing “that could obliterate the faith of millions.”<sup>19</sup> To go from actively censoring and ridiculing those who urged officials to investigate the lab-leak theory further to suggesting they may have been right all along, is to call into question every other detail we’ve been told to believe about the COVID-19 narrative, and beyond.

## **Big Tech Has Become the Regulator Instead of the Regulated**

Scientific norms are rapidly changing during the pandemic, such that everyone is suddenly an expert. Ioannidis reported that by August 2021, 330,000 scientific papers had been published about COVID-19, written by about 1 million different people.<sup>20</sup>

There are 174 scientific subfields, and all of them had specialists who published papers on COVID-19. Ioannidis and colleagues called “the rapid and massive involvement of the scientific workforce in COVID-19-related work” unprecedented<sup>21</sup> but noted that much of it is fundamentally flawed:<sup>22</sup>

*“[W]e have anecdotally noted that many published contributions represent situations of epistemic trespassing, where scientists try to address COVID-19 health and medical questions, although they come from unrelated fields and probably lack fundamental subject-matter expertise.”*

Social and mainstream media have played a role in deciding who is an “expert” and who is not, while those who questioned the “expert” data or asked for more evidence were vilified — a “dismissive, authoritarian approach ‘in defense of science.’”<sup>23</sup> The end result is an altered reality in which heavily conflicted corporations have emerged as regulators of society instead of being regulated themselves:<sup>24</sup>

*“Other potentially conflicted entities became the new societal regulators, rather than the ones being regulated. Big Tech companies, which gained trillions of dollars in cumulative market value from the virtual transformation of human life during lockdown, developed powerful censorship machineries that skewed the information available to users on their platforms.*

*Consultants who made millions of dollars from corporate and government consultation were given prestigious positions, power, and public praise, while unconflicted scientists who worked pro bono but dared to question dominant narratives were smeared as being conflicted.”*

The end result is that many scientists self-censored to avoid getting caught in the crossfire, which represents “a major loss for scientific investigation and the public health effort.” Yet, it remains true that the path to good science and the truth depends on continued scientific exploration, challenges and skepticism – all things that have been seen as anathema due to the authoritarian control that has taken over during the pandemic.

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