

Strange Bedfellows: GMO and Vaccine Partnerships

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Industry front groups include the Genetic Literacy Project, the American Council for Science and Health, Science 2.0, GMO Answers, Independent Women's Forum, Science Codex, Center for Consumer Freedom and the Center for Inquiry
- Once you start to investigate these front groups, you'll find the same names appearing again and again, cowriting articles, interviewing each other and referring to each other's work in a closed loop
- The seven classic techniques of propaganda have been clearly delineated and are used without exception by most industries
- Astroturfing is when a special interests group creates a fake grassroots campaign for or against a particular agenda
- The vaccine and biotechnology industries have joined forces and are using the same terminology and the same psychological assault strategies against their detractors

By Dr. Mercola

Over the years, I've written a number of articles outing industry front groups¹ such as the Genetic Literacy Project, the [American Council for Science and Health](#) (ACSH),² Science 2.0, GMO Answers, Independent Women's Forum, Science Codex, Center for Consumer Freedom and the Center for Inquiry.

Once you start to investigate these front groups, you'll find the same names appearing again and again, cowriting articles, interviewing each other and referring to each other's work in a closed loop.

I've also written about academics and journalists who, while presenting themselves as independent experts, are actually shells for industry. This is a fairly close-knit group of individuals, so the worst actors are not hard to identify based on their associations.

Well-established actors include Forbes contributor Kavin Senapathy;³ Henry Miller; Steven Salzberg;⁴ Bruce Chassy, Jon Entine,^{5,6} Kevin Folta, Keith Kloor⁷ and Mark Lynas.

Learn to Recognize Astroturfing When You See It

In the TED Talk above, award-winning investigative journalist Sharyl Attkisson discusses strategies used by industry to manipulate public opinion and steer online discussion.

A strategy that has become phenomenally popular with the advent of social media is [astroturfing](#), which is when a special interests group creates a fake grassroots campaign for or against a particular agenda. You might think it's a group of moms devoted to children's health that is touting the benefits of GMOs or vaccines, for example, when in fact the campaign is run by industry.

Increasingly over the past year or so you may have seen a number of articles simultaneously criticizing both the "anti-vaxxers" and "anti-GMO movement," making contemptuous and sometimes wildly insulting comments about people who question the safety of either of these industries and their wares.

While [GMOs](#) and [vaccines](#) may seem like strange bedfellows, the cross-linking of these two industries in propaganda material is neither accidental nor haphazard.

Industry Messaging Example

In a May 18, 2017, Forbes article,⁸ Senapathy (one well-known mouthpiece for the GMO industry) took aim at the "anti-vaccine and anti-GMO movements," saying they're "inextricably linked and cause preventable suffering."

"The thoroughly answered question of whether vaccines cause autism isn't really a question outside of conspiracy-theorist circles," Senapathy writes.

"The body of evidence shows that vaccination has ... vastly reduced suffering and death ... and that vaccines don't cause autism, cancer, dementia or long term health problems, and that any minute risk is vastly outweighed by benefits to individuals and society."

Yet with the backing of prominent leaders like [Robert DeNiro](#) and [Robert Kennedy Jr.](#), anti-vaccine groups fuel common narratives that keep herd immunity down, directly leading to suffering and death.

Now with Donald Trump embracing vaccine skeptics, the anti-vaccine movement has earned a hallowed place on the shelf next to other tinfoil hat clad schools of thought.

The question of the safety of genetically engineered crops (GMOs) has been answered just as thoroughly, and the anti-GMO movement deserves its own place on the same shelf, not just for being wrong but for its role in unconscionable suffering ...

She goes on to point out how similar the communication tactics are between vaccine and GMO detractors. Ironically, her article reveals just as much if not more about the biotech and vaccine industries' messaging tactics. You can go through her article and check off numerous boxes for how to spot a piece of industry propaganda.

That includes the claim that the science is settled (which automatically precludes the need for further discussion), citing a fellow industry shill (in this case Kloor), using strong, derogatory language when describing those who disagree with industry talking points, making ample references to "conspiracy theories" and "other tinfoil hat clad schools of thought."

Seven Classic Propaganda Techniques

Whenever you hear or read that someone is a "quack," and that "the science has been settled," or that something is "science-based," it's probably a smear campaign created by an astroturf group, industry front group or paid shill. In fact, the seven techniques of propaganda have been clearly delineated and are used without exception by most industries. As noted by writer Morgan Crouch in his article, "What Are the Seven Techniques of Propaganda?" these include:⁹

1. Name calling — Derogatory terms or discriminatory words used to arouse suspicion and prejudice
2. Glittering generalities — Slogans, catchphrases and highly generalized statements that sound good but mean little and prove nothing (such as "the science is settled")

3. Transfer — The linking of a company/industry idea with a revered symbol
4. Testimonial — Testimony by a respected authority, similar to celebrity endorsement
5. Plain folks — Corporate material presented by someone who appears to be "just like you" — someone who shares your concerns and ideals
6. Bandwagon — Creating the illusion that there's a consensus, which capitalizes on people's inherent desire to be on the "right" side
7. Card stacking — Using only those facts that support the company's/industry's ideas, with the aim of making you assume these facts are conclusive. As noted by Crouch, "By 'stacking cards against the truth,' propagandists can control the beliefs of their audience"

Pesticide and Vaccine Partnerships Revealed

While Senapathy tries to show how those who question the safety of either GMOs or vaccines are all alike — that is, tinfoil hat-wearing lunatics who follow flat-earth theories in their spare time — what she ultimately achieves is a perfect example of industry PR.

This systematic messaging strategy has been carefully developed, and is known to have a penetrating psychological effect. Both the vaccine and biotechnology industries use the same terminology and the same psychological assault strategies to make you feel like you're in the wrong — or worse.

In her article, Senapathy basically accuses all vaccine and GMO safety advocates of being killers, merely for asking questions and not settling for non-answers, and doing what they think is right for their own health and that of their children.

Another article¹⁰ that connects the vaccine and chemical technology industries was recently published by The Feed.

In it, Ashleigh Morse, Ph.D., whose training centers on psychology and the influence of environmental cues on decision-making, and who says she works as a consultant to "a range of clients" in the field of science communication and public health,¹¹ argues that juries are incapable of assessing the validity of scientific evidence presented in court, or the validity of the scientific methods used.

Specifically, Morse — whose professional credits include a single published research paper listed on her LinkedIn bio on the role of opioid processes in reward and decision-making — is referring to the recent [jury verdict against Monsanto](#), but she goes on to link that to vaccine science. "When juries decide on the science, we get autism linked to vaccines and the Monsanto verdict," she writes.

When In Doubt, Blame the Russians

Then there's the curious claim that the Russians are to blame for Americans' lack of faith in vaccine safety.¹² According to a recent paper¹³ published in the American Journal of Public Health, Russian trolls and Soviet-directed Twitter bots promoted anti-vaccine information on social media to "amplify the vaccine debate" and create dissent in the U.S.

According to the authors, "Accounts masquerading as legitimate users create false equivalency, eroding public consensus on vaccination," and "Directly confronting vaccine skeptics enables bots to legitimize the vaccine debate." Those two sentences are interesting and revealing indeed.

In a nutshell, they're saying that by providing anti-vaccine content, these bots made it seem as though there was actually something to discuss when, in the opinion of the authors, no discussion about vaccine safety should occur at all.

Apparently, it is their view that the vaccine debate is "illegitimate," since there's "public consensus" on vaccines (refer back to the bandwagon strategy, No. 6 in the propaganda list above).

In other words, everyone knows vaccines are safe; the science is settled, so there's no valid reason to question it. Summing up the alleged Russian bots' efforts to sway public opinion against vaccination, the authors referred to it as "weaponized health communication."

The Russians Did It Again

Coincidentally, the vaccine paper above was submitted for publication shortly after news stories began circulating claiming the Russians were behind anti-GMO rhetoric.¹⁴ Minnesota Farm Living writes:¹⁵

"Researchers from Iowa State University (Shawn Dorius and Carolyn Lawrence-Dill) wanted to better understand the controversy around genetically engineered food.¹⁶ The issue is with the overwhelming belief in the science community is that GMOs are safe, consumers still question their safety. Dorius and Lawrence-Dill wanted to find out why.

What they found was surprising. The ISU researchers looked at not only how U.S. publications portrayed GMOs but also looked at the American versions of RT and Sputnik, two Russian publications. They counted how many times the term 'GMO' was used in different publications ...

They went a step further and analyzed the tone of each article. What they found is the Russian publications were overwhelming anti-GMO. The articles talked negatively about environmental risks, nutrition concerns, and health risks of GMOs."

Here, the author links to the "Are GMOs Safe?" page on the Genetic Literacy Project's website as evidence to support GMO safety. But, the Genetic Literacy Project is a well-known front group for the GMO industry and hardly a reliable source of impartial information.

As for why the Russians would want to spread anti-GMO rhetoric in the U.S., the study authors note Russia has an interest in creating division among the American people to weaken the country as a whole, and to promote their own agricultural exports, as Russia banned GMOs in 2016 and is trying to increase its exports of organic food.

Claim of Scientific Consensus on GMO Safety Is Patently False

In the Minnesota Farm Living article cited above, you can see the telltale industry rhetoric in the sentence, "the overwhelming belief in the science community is that GMOs are safe, [yet] consumers still question their safety." The reality is there is no scientific consensus on the safety of GMOs.

That is in fact the title of a scientific statement¹⁷ published in the peer-reviewed journal Environmental Sciences Europe, January 24, 2015. The statement, aptly titled "No Scientific Consensus on GMO Safety," was signed by 300 scientists, researchers, physicians and scholars.

What's more, the paper states that the claim of scientific consensus on GMO safety is in actuality "an artificial construct that has been falsely perpetuated," and that such a claim "is misleading and misrepresents or outright ignores the currently available scientific evidence and the broad diversity of scientific opinions among scientists on this issue."

In addition, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration still does not possess any evidence demonstrating safety because they do not do scientific reviews. And even if they did, hundreds of scientists say there's no evidence demonstrating that genetically engineered foods are safe, and a number of independent studies have raised serious health concerns.

To learn more about how GMOs were introduced into the food supply without safety testing, see my two-part interview with attorney Steven Druker, author of "Altered Genes, Twisted Truth." ([Part 1](#), [Part 2](#).)

GMO-Vaccine Convergence

The reason for the joining of PR forces between the vaccine and biotech industries becomes clearer when you take into account the fact that GMOs are moving into the vaccine industry. The 2016 article,¹⁸ "GMOs Lead the Fight Against Zika, Ebola and the Next Unknown Pandemic," published in *The Conversation*, asserts that GMOs play a "vital role" in medicine, adding:

"Most modern biomedical advances, especially the vaccines used to eradicate disease and protect against pandemics ... rely on the same molecular biology tools that are used to create genetically modified organisms."

To protect the public, scientists have embraced GMO technology to quickly study new health threats, manufacture enough protective vaccines, and monitor and even predict new outbreaks."

Additionally, scientists are also exploring the possibility of vaccinating plants against pests as an alternative to using pesticides.¹⁹ In other words, it's really quite crucial for these two bedfellows, strange as their joining may seem at first, to get people to embrace both genetic engineering and vaccines.

That's why we're now seeing more and more articles deriding both vaccine and GMO safety advocates in the same piece, whether it necessarily makes sense to do so or not.

Both of these industries are using the exact same messaging strategies — because so far they have worked — to achieve the same aim: Shame those who dare question the safety of either, and make them feel like ignorant outcasts and social misfits, thereby shutting down the conversation.

Preempting Your Rights

In my five-part "Ghost in the Machine" series, I discuss the many ways in which big industries manipulate science, and how they've captured our regulatory agencies and manipulate our political system. Here's a listing of the series, in case you missed any of them:

[Introduction to Ghost in the Machine — A New Article Series That Exposes How Puppet Masters Control the for Their Benefit](#)

[Ghost in the Machine, Part 1 — Drug Safety and Media Shaped by Big Pharma](#)

[Ghost in the Machine, Part 2 — Success Breeds Greed That Gets in the Way of Ethics, Common Sense and Caution](#)

[Ghost in the Machine, Part 3 — Pride and the Politics of Vaccines](#)

[Ghost in the Machine, Part 4 — The War on Supplements, Essential Oils and Homeopathy](#)

[Ghost in the Machine, Part 5 — Lies, Denial, Deceit and Manipulative 'Research'](#)

A feature common to both the vaccine industry and the biotech industry is the use of legislation to preempt your rights and force you to use their products whether you want to or not, and without regard for the health consequences.

In recent years, I've written extensively about the vaccine industry's attempts to mandate vaccines and [eliminate personal belief exemptions](#) across the U.S. In some cases, they've succeeded. In others, they've lost, but efforts to strip every American of their right to informed consent and medical freedom is ongoing.

The chemical technology industry is following the same agenda. One of the latest infringements on your rights is a provision in the Farm Bill that would block local governments from regulating pesticide use. The U.S. House committee approved the draft back in April. As noted by Jay Feldman, executive director of Beyond Pesticides:²⁰

"This is really a backdoor attempt to interfere with state governments and local governments. I think the trend is for local governments to engage on this issue. This would undermine that."

Monsanto Ghostwriting Shill Attempts to Tie USRTK to Russian Troll Efforts

A common corporate tactic is to use "third-party experts" to bring the industry's message to the public under the cloak of independent opinion or expertise (No. 4, "Testimonial"). The idea is that academic types are far more credible than industry employees when it comes to defending the industry's position.

A well-known spokesperson for the GMO industry is Henry Miller, who was thoroughly outed as a Monsanto shill during the 2012 Proposition 37 GMO labeling campaign in California. A "No on 37" advertisement had to be pulled off the air because Miller was fraudulently identified as being part of the Stanford University faculty.

Last year, Miller was outed yet again — this time as a ghostwriter for Monsanto. [Forbes fired Miller](#) when it became clear he had submitted ghostwritten material. On a relevant side note, Senapathy has cowritten articles with Miller, which is why some of her Forbes articles ended up being deleted as well,²¹ and the foreword for her book "Fear Babe" was written by Folta, a University of Florida professor who hid his financial ties to Monsanto.

The Freedom of Information Act Request (FOIA) discovery against Monsanto was led by U.S. Right to Know (USRTK). Proving he's still working on Monsanto's behalf, Miller penned a two-part article^{22,23} for Investor's Business Daily this past summer, in which he tries — quite unsuccessfully — to tie USRTK to the alleged Russian GMO disinformation campaign.

The fact that they're still turning to Miller is probably a sign of just how desperate Monsanto (now Bayer) has become. Other discovery documents obtained by USRTK included email correspondence revealing Monsanto has been quite desperate for a number of years already.

In an email dated February 26, 2015, Daniel Goldstein, senior science lead of medical sciences and outreach for Monsanto, tells Monsanto's food safety scientific affairs lead, John Vicini, Ph.D.:²⁴

Message

From: GOLDSTEIN, DANIEL A [AG/1000] [/O=MONSANTO/OU=NA-1000-01/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=527246]
Sent: 2/26/2015 8:08:31 PM
To: VICINI, JOHN L [AG/1000] [/O=MONSANTO/OU=NA-1000-01/cn=Recipients/cn=56908]; REYNOLDS, TRACEY L [AG/1000] [/O=MONSANTO/OU=NA-1000-01/cn=recipients/cn=133378]
CC: SACHS, ERIC S [AG/1000] [/O=MONSANTO/OU=NA-1000-01/cn=Recipients/cn=171736]
Subject: ACSH

While I would love to have more friends and more choices, we don't have a lot of supporters and can't afford to lose the few we have....

I am well aware of the challenges with ACSH and know Eric has valid concerns- so I can assure you I am not all starry-eyed about ACSH- they have PLENTY of warts- but:

You WILL NOT GET A BETTER VALUE FOR YOUR DOLLAR than ACSH:

In this email, Goldstein admits two pearls: First, the list of supporters willing to do their dirty work is short — which is why we keep seeing the same names pop up in pro-GMO propoganda pieces — and ACSH is a most valuable front group for the biotech industry.

Another Undercover Ambassador for GMO Industry Wants You to Think the Russians Are Responsible for 'Anti-Vaccine Myths'

So, who else wants you to think that "the Russians did it"? Mark Lynas, a long-term shill for the GMO industry, just published: "Opinion: Russian Campaign to Spread Anti-Vaccine Myths Part of a Wider War on Science and Truth"²⁵ on the Alliance for Science website.

As the other examples cited above, Lynas — normally a [pro-GMO advocate](#) — is now cross-linking GMOs and vaccines, closely mimicking the core message of Senapathy's article, which is that "Many anti-GMO groups and anti-vaxxers are closely linked."

Again, what we're seeing is a crossover or merging of the GMO and vaccine industries in terms of messaging and propoganda angles. Rather than fighting public doubt separately, the shills for these industries are now putting out a

single joint message that anyone who doubts the science presented by either of them is an anti-science nut job.

The take-home message here is that these tactics are nothing but a PR ploy. Yes, they're trying to make you feel like an outsider, an outcast. They're trying to make you feel ashamed of your "ignorance," or worse, as if you've fallen for false propaganda propagated by evil Russians in an effort to divide and conquer.

But all you really need to do is look for the hallmarks of astroturfing, and you'll quickly see through their ruse. You are not wrong for questioning flawed and biased science. You are not ignorant for questioning whether vaccines and GMOs might be unsafe when there's a clear lack of evidence to support safety claims.

You are not a danger to the public for looking at the evidence and making your own decisions about whether or not you want your family to receive a particular vaccine or eat a certain food. Your inquiries and thought processes are only dangerous to the industries in question which, by the way, are willing to go to just about any lengths to hide the dangers of their products in order to maintain their profits. Stand your ground. It's solid.

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