Version

This is the publisher’s version. This version is defined in the NISO recommended practice RP-8-2008 http://www.niso.org/publications/rp/

Suggested Reference


Copyright

Items in ResearchSpace are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved, unless otherwise indicated. Previously published items are made available in accordance with the copyright policy of the publisher.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License.

http://www.bmj.com/about-bmj/resources-authors/forms-policies-and-checklists/copyright-open-access-and-permission-reuse

http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/issn/0959-8138/

https://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/docs/uoa-docs/rights.htm
WHO GAINS FROM THE MEDIA’S MISREPRESENTATION OF SCIENCE?

Skilled use of the media by vested interests to promote drugs and other health products

David B Menkes academic psychiatrist, Joel Lexchin professor

1Waikato Clinical Campus, Hamilton 3240, New Zealand; 2School of Health Policy and Management, Faculty of Health, York University, Toronto, ON, Canada M3J 1P3

McCartney draws attention to the enduring problem of the media being all too ready to oversimplify, dramatise, and rehash medical science. Such “churnalism” benefits the media, in revenue if not reputation, often at the expense of public understanding. It is sobering to consider that clinical trial authors themselves often initiate the “spin” cycle.

Another concern, totally ignored by McCartney, is the skilled use of the media by vested interests to promote drugs and other health products. Evidence indicates how widespread, biased, and effective such promotions are, particularly when cloaked in respectable language and presented as scientific news rather than an advertisement. Cherry picked scientific “findings” are an analogous feature of direct to consumer advertising of prescription drugs, banned in most Western countries, with the notable exceptions of the US and New Zealand.

Patients, doctors, and the public have a shared stake in the benefits of health literacy. Commercial distortion of medical science by the media, whether to sell copy or push product, compromises patients’ ability to usefully participate in clinical decision making.

Competing interests: None declared.

3 Sismondo S. Ghost management: how much of the medical literature is shaped behind the scenes by the pharmaceutical industry? PLoS Med 2007;4:e286. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.0040286. 17896859.

Published by the BMJ Publishing Group Limited. For permission to use (where not already granted under a licence) please go to http://group.bmj.com/group/rights-licensing/permissions

david.menkes@auckland.ac.nz

For personal use only: See rights and reprints http://www.bmj.com/permissions
Subscribe: http://www.bmj.com/subscribe