

# Inside The Corrupt World Of Alzheimer’s Science (And What Its Failure Means For All ‘Settled Science’)

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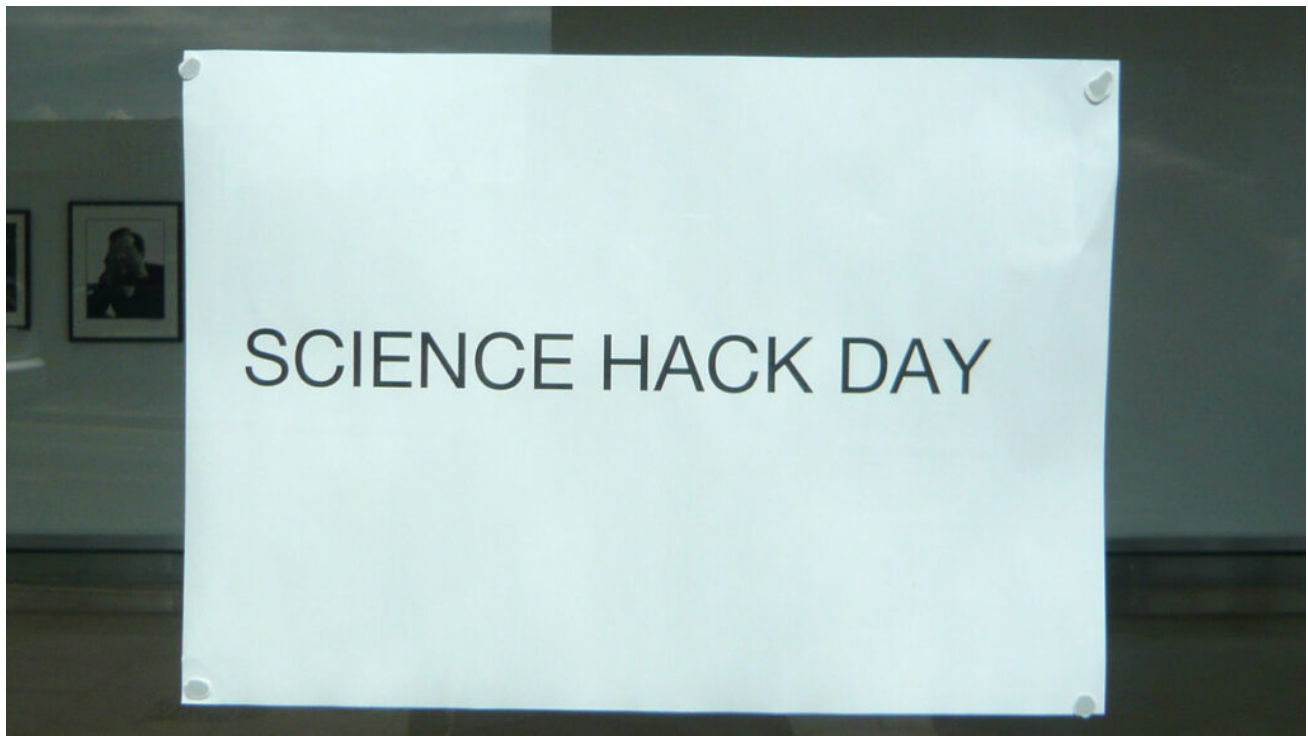


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Science

By: Christopher Bedford

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7 min read

In Alzheimer’s — as in coronavirus and global warming — the science is far from settled.



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An international cabal of scientists who believe in their own righteousness. Scientific journals, conferences, and grants that suppress dissent. Tens of billions of dollars in taxpayer, Big Pharma and venture capital money. Decades of research — and precious little to show for it all.

I'm not describing Covid, global warming, or any other highly politicized scientific debate. I'm talking about Alzheimer's research. The implications for the rest of science, policy, and education, however, are deep and troubling.

**Everyone in the United States knows about Alzheimer's.** Audiences across the country have read (or at least seen) "The Notebook." More recently, "The Father," starring Anthony Hopkins, won two Academy Awards and made basically everyone cry.

The reason so many of us cried is that so many know someone who's suffered from this disease. We know what it is, we know what it does — and we know it's terrible.

All that is to say we care about Alzheimer's like we care about cancer, heart disease, and others that have touched us personally. Did you know, however, that despite being officially diagnosed over a century ago; despite all the grants, institutes, and money poured into it; and despite Americans' personal interest in solving it, we haven't discovered a single cure?

Zero. We don't even have any treatments, really.

Why not? To start, we might have been focused on the wrong thing.

Ever since Dr. Alois Alzheimer first identified the disease that now bears his name, we've taken an interest in the plaque deposits found in the brains of deceased patients. Follow-up research into the disease was slow to pick up, however, only gaining serious interest in the 1970s, when Congress established the National Institute on Aging (attached to the National Institutes of Health), and then gaining speed in the 1980s with private institutes joining the fray.

The main driver of these plaques was finally discovered in 1984 and identified as Amyloid beta. The discovery was electric, and quickly gained adherents.

Three years after, in 1987, [STAT News reports](#), a new study further discovered “mutations in a gene called APP that increases amyloid levels and causes Alzheimer’s in middle age, supporting the then-emerging orthodoxy.”

By 1991, [Science magazine reports](#), many scientists considered the amyloid thesis settled fact. Even serious studies casting doubt on the hypothesis were largely disregarded, including [a 1991 study](#) that found that, “although the brains of elderly Alzheimer’s patients had amyloid plaques, so did the brains of people the same age who died with no signs of dementia.”

At the same time, scientists began to wonder if Amyloid was the cause of the disease, or merely a sign of the damage the actual cause was doing to the brain; the difference between, say, a terminal disease and the tombstone left behind after it’s taken its toll.

The science, however, was settled, and alternative hypotheses would no longer be considered.

“In more than two dozen interviews,” a 2019 STAT News expose revealed, “scientists whose ideas fell outside the dogma recounted how, for decades, believers in the dominant hypothesis suppressed research on alternative ideas: They influenced what studies got published in top journals, which scientists got funded, who got tenure, and who got speaking slots at reputation-buffing scientific conferences.”

Straying outside the dogma would get you marked as a “traitor,” one prominent scientist [explained](#), and could cost the heretic published articles, prominent posts, grant money for research, and speaking slots at prestigious conferences.

Even private investment in novel Alzheimer’s research was tied up, Science and STAT News report. How? Before investing in a dissenting scientist’s idea, venture capitalists would often seek the input of top Alzheimer’s scientists, who would dismiss the alternate hypotheses.

**The 100-year anniversary of Dr. Alzheimer’s discovery** might have been the year for skeptics to have their say, pointing out that despite decades of research and money, no cure yet existed. But that very year, Science reports, “[a breathtaking Nature paper](#) entered the breach.”

The study built on existing amyloid theories but discovered what its author called “the first substance ever identified in brain tissue in Alzheimer’s research that has been shown to cause memory impairment.”

It went off like a bomb, reinvigorating a dogma that had been showing signs of age after decades of failure. Over the next 15 years, the 2006 study would be cited in more than 2,000 other scholarly works.

Then in 2022, it would be exposed as seemingly fraudulent by a host of credible scientific investigators.

Fraudulent, as in, literally using falsified images to make its case. The “substance,” it turns out, might not even exist.

The damage, however, was done. Since the study was first published, millions of manhours and billions of dollars had been spent chasing its conclusions. Minds that could have been working toward actual progress had instead been led astray. Conclusions based on false presumptions had been compromised — as have any studies based on those now-compromised studies that worked off of the 2006 findings.

The reality is while one (or a few) dishonest players certainly caused a great deal of damage, they couldn't have done it without the assistance of a cabal of senior scientists who jealously guarded their theory — and put down those rebels who dared question it.

“Things [had] shifted from a scientific inquiry into an almost religious belief system, where people stopped being skeptical or even questioning,” former National Institute on Aging scientist Zaven Khachaturian told STAT three years before that specific report was exposed.

None of this means the people who've devoted their lives to researching Alzheimer's are some nefarious cult. They were just human beings — meaning they were greedy, protective, prideful, and prone to groupthink.

“It's difficult to break into a field with so many strong voices supporting a single target,” INmune Bio CEO Dr. Raymond Tesi explained to STAT News. “Alzheimer's has egos and superstars and big personas unlike anything I've seen elsewhere.”

These men and women had lucrative careers to defend. “Admitting doubt,” STAT senior writer Sharon Begley concluded, “let alone error, would not only be a blow to the ego but also a threat to livelihood.”

“There were very big egos involved and they couldn't stand to be wrong,” Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai neuroscientist Nikolaos Robakis agreed. “It wasn't science anymore.”

**The above is the story of how quickly greed, pride, and groupthink** can get out of hand in even a strictly scientific field of research — one so many Americans across all parties and incomes and races are personally interested in figuring out.

How much easier, then, could this be in more politically fractious fields? In fields that allow the top scientists access to more than simple money and prestige, but also power.

In fields like global warming, where dissenters (or even mere skeptics) are labeled “deniers”? Just this week, Al Gore compared those skeptics to the Ulvade, Texas police, whose inaction contributed to the murder of 19 schoolchildren and two teachers.

Billions more dollars flow into this field than into Alzheimer’s research. In the name of global warming, organizations like the United Nations join powerful state actors across the planet in shaping policy and economics based on the favored research.

From its very beginning, global warming scientists’ most alarmist claims have been disproven, yet still they march on, confident as ever.

And what about Covid science, where celebrity scientists have admitted mistakes and even lies; yet plow forward shamelessly, pillorying and censoring any who would dare speak against them?

There — as in Alzheimer’s, as in global warming — the science is far from settled. The reality is, science is never truly settled. Instead, the only certain thing is the power, money, and influence that comes when experts claim otherwise.

These weaknesses are human weaknesses. And behind the totem of “settled science,” it’s just that — humans; just as we’re behind the all sorts of authoritative veneers. In the end, these claims to power and hidden knowledge are just us — for all our pride, greed, fear, and imperfections.

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Christopher Bedford is a senior editor at The Federalist, a founding partner of RightForge, vice chairman of Young Americans for Freedom, a board member at The Daily Caller News Foundation and National Journalism Center, and the author of "The Art of the Donald." His work has been featured in The American Mind, National Review, the New York Post and the Daily Caller, where he led the Daily Caller News Foundation and spent eight years. A frequent guest on Fox News and Fox Business, he was raised in Massachusetts and lives across the river from D.C. Follow him on [Twitter](#).