

The Façade of 'Fact' Checking

What Truth-Telling Experts Face Behind the Scenes



DR. BYRAM W. BRIDLE

MAY 18, 2023



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Since the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic I have endeavoured to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about the science of SARS-CoV-2. I have remained open to adjusting my messaging in response to the evolving scientific data. This is how I have conducted my business throughout my career as an academic viral immunologist.

Prior to three years ago, this was universally well-received. However, I have now been 'fact'-checked too many times to count. And the conclusion from each one that has been published was that I had disseminated so-called 'misinformation' or, at a minimum, 'misleading' information. I have often been asked why I apparently didn't bother to respond to these. So, I thought it might be of interest to share my behind-the-scenes experiences, which are shared by almost all experts of integrity that have had differences of opinion with the prevailing COVID-19 narrative.

Since these 'fact' checks often seem compelling, they can cause people to question even the most honest of experts. So, it has dawned on me that it might be helpful for the public to get a behind-the-scenes look at a personal experience.

First, I have thoroughly addressed any scientific accusations made against me over the course of a myriad of public interviews; always backed by published peer-reviewed scientific articles. But, these do not reach nearly as many people as the 'fact' checks do. And these 'fact' check are never corrected or taken down, even when the scientific evidence becomes overwhelmingly in favour of the perspective that was deemed to have been incorrect.

Also, not one person who has ever accused me of disseminating misinformation has ever had a conversation with me prior to doing so. Lack of access to mainstream media outlets

and active censorship have become the norm for many people who were historically recognized as reliable experts. That alone should be of major concern to the public.

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As for the 'fact' checks, here are the real facts as revealed through a couple of representative personal examples...

Lack of Respect for Professional Obligations

Here is a request from a 'fact' checker. First, I have to give kudos to this person for disclosing their identity. Many 'fact' checks are done anonymously (e.g., see my second example).

One strategy of disrespect that is sometimes used by 'fact' checkers is failure to use professional titles. In this case, Ms. Livingstone would have known that I am an Associate Professor and, therefore, have the title of "Assoc. Prof." or "Dr." by virtue of holding the most advanced degree that can be awarded, which is a PhD/Doctorate. After all, this had been highlighted at the beginning of the interview that she was referring to.

As an aside and for interest sake, here is the sequence of degrees in order of prestige from least to most: bachelor's degree, professional undergraduate degree (includes MD), master's degree, doctorate (also known as a PhD). Yes, an MD ranks well below a PhD and even a MSc and is considered an undergraduate degree. Personally, I prefer that people who know me, call me by my first name. I hate the concept of wielding titles; everyone has their area of expertise and all people are deserving of equal respect. But, in a professional

setting, especially when engaging with an expert from a biased perspective, not using the proper formal title is a classic sign of disrespect. Note that the first sentence indicates that this 'journalist' conducts checks "so they are labelled as misleading". Shouldn't a 'journalist' be conducting checks in a way that would potentially allow posts to be labeled as factual? There was a clear bias here.

Fact check: Covid-19 spike proteins

Livingstone, Natasha <Natasha.Livingstone@thomsonreuters.com>

Tue 6/8/2021 5:24 AM

To: Byram Bridle <bbridle@uoguelph.ca>

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the University of Guelph. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. If in doubt, forward suspicious emails to IThelp@uoguelph.ca

Good morning Mr Bridle,

I am a journalist for Reuters [fact-checking department](#) working with Facebook as third-party fact checkers. We apply our checks to social media posts, so they are labelled as misleading and have their distribution reduced.

We are writing a fact check about your claim that spike proteins from COVID-19 vaccines produce harmful toxins (<https://omny.fm/shows/on-point-with-alex-pierson/new-peer-reviewed-study-on-covid-19-vaccines-sugge>).

I am getting in touch to give you the opportunity to clarify your argument and provide evidence for it by the end of today.

Many thanks,

Natasha Livingstone
Journalist for Reuters Fact Check

A key and common strategy used by people that 'fact'-checked me was providing unreasonably short times to respond. In most cases, I was asked to respond the same day. In this example, I was given less than twelve hours.

My email inbox has been chronically overloaded since a well-coordinated and very large smear campaign was launched against me in May of 2021 following the interview that this check focused on. As such, with one exception, I never found these messages until after the deadline had passed. But, even if I did see these messages the same day, it is unrealistic and unfair to expect a professional to drop everything to respond within hours.

At my academic institution, we are asked to check our emails once every regular work day. Many of us do these checks at the end of the day once our key work responsibilities have been met. This negates the ability to address most 'fact' checks. And if the 'fact' checkers do not receive their responses by their unrealistic deadlines, they automatically weigh the evidence in favour of their narrative-promoting 'expert(s)' and designate your message as

'misinformation'. Hence the appearance that most experts of integrity 'failed' to respond to these checks.

By the way, published peer-reviewed scientific evidence now overwhelmingly demonstrates that the three 'highly controversial' things I said in the interview targeted by this 'fact' check were 100% correct. Can you even believe that one of the things that caused people to turn my life into a living hell was because I stated there might be a link between mRNA COVID-19 'vaccines' and myocarditis?!? The other two inconvenient truths were: 1. The lipid nanoparticles that carry the mRNA of the mRNA-based COVID-19 'vaccines' don't stay at the injection site; 2. The spike protein has multiple mechanisms by which it could potentially cause toxic effects in the body (due to time limitations I could only address one of these many concerns). Having too much expertise and thus being able to uncover legitimate concerns from limited scientific data has proven to be a nightmare for many people over the past three years.

Well-Supported Rebuttals Are Time-Sinks With No Public Benefit

On one occasion, a request from a 'fact' checker popped up on my screen while I was sitting in front of my computer. So, I took advantage of this to demonstrate that I always have solid scientific evidence to support my messaging. I trusted the journalistic process. This was the sequence of events...

1. I received this request (note that it was anonymous, which is typical; it also suggested that an entire 'team' was involved)...

From: reutersfactcheck@thomsonreuters.com <reutersfactcheckthomsonreuters.com@thomsonreuters.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 6, 2021 12:27 PM
To: Byram Bridle
<bbridle@uoguelph.ca>; reutersfactcheck@thomsonreuters.com<reutersfactcheckthomsonreuters.com@thomsonreuters.com>
Subject: Reuters request for comment

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Dear Dr Bridle,
We are fact checking the claims you made in a video address in Toronto on 18/9/21: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=263920672309632>

Do you have any additional evidence to support these claims?

1. Males aged 12-15 are 6 times more likely to get heart inflammation following the vaccine than to get severe Covid-19
2. There is a confirmed link between abnormal menstrual bleeding and vaccination
3. The vaccine is not safe for pregnant women

Thanks,

Reuters Fact Check team

2. This was my response (I blind copied several legal teams and media outlets to help hold Reuters accountable)...

On Oct 6, 2021, at 14:21, Byram Bridle <bbridle@uoguelph.ca> wrote:

Bcc: lawyers and members of the media

Dear Reuters 'Fact Checkers',

My statements are always founded on scientific data. Please note that your e-mail demonstrates an inappropriate journalistic practice. Two of your statements misrepresent what I said. I would urge you to review the video that you sent me to confirm this. My responses are bolded and embedded in your text below.

I trust that your published 'fact check' will: (a) include my responses verbatim with all my references that I provided, (b) be written by a highly qualified scientist(s) who will describe their credentials and explain how the information that I provided is or is not valid, and (c) be written to much higher professional and objective standards than were applied to the text you provided below.

Please forward a copy of the official fact check.

Sincerely,
Byram

Byram W. Bridle, PhD
Associate Professor of Viral Immunology
Office Room #4834
Lab Room #3808
Building #89 (NW corner Gordon/McGilvray)
Department of Pathobiology
University of Guelph
50 Stone Road East
Guelph, Ontario, Canada
N1G 2W1
Office Telephone #519-824-4120 x54657
Lab Telephone #519-824-4120 x53616
E-mail: bbridle@uoguelph.ca
<https://ovc.uoguelph.ca/pathobiology/people/faculty/Byram-W-Bridle>

And I included these responses embedded among their original text...

Dear Dr Bridle,

We are fact checking the claims you made in a video address in Toronto on 18/9/21: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=263920672309632>

Do you have any additional evidence to support these claims?

1. Males aged 12-15 are 6 times more likely to get heart inflammation following the vaccine than to get severe Covid-19
Please see the attached pre-print article of a study run out of the University of California. You may also be keen to know that many countries just recently suspended the use of Moderna's vaccine in young males, including in Canada (eg, <https://o.canada.com/news/provincial/ontario-now-recommending-against-moderna-vaccine-for-men-18-24-years-old>), due to an excessively high incidence of heart inflammation. I have also attached a recent peer-reviewed scientific publication (first author is Dr. Jessica Rose) that shows the myocarditis signal is 19-fold higher than background in the VAERS database.

2. There is a confirmed link between abnormal menstrual bleeding and vaccination
I did not state that there is a confirmed link. I stated that this has finally been acknowledged as problem in many women that have been vaccinated as evidenced by the initiation of several studies to evaluate this potential link (see the announcement here: <https://www.nichd.nih.gov/newsroom/news/083021-COVID-19-vaccination-menstruation>). I stated that this is practicing science in reverse. The potential for problems should have been thoroughly investigated prior to a mass rollout into the public; not after observing too many problems accumulate post-rollout.

3. The vaccine is not safe for pregnant women

I did not make the statement that the vaccine was unsafe. I said that a key study underpinning the declaration of safety was debunked. I have stated on numerous occasions that the onus is not on the general scientific and medical community to prove these vaccines are dangerous. The onus is on those pushing the vaccines to prove they are safe. This is standard practice. A debunked safety study fails to provide evidence of safety. Specifically, the authors made a simple mathematical error that precluded them from drawing any conclusions Re: risks during pregnancy. I have attached a copy of the original paper that was published in the NEJM, as well as the correction.

Thanks,

Reuters Fact Check team

Remarkably, the supposed 'fact' checkers had misattributed quotes to me. They couldn't even get my facts straight. So, I learned that I had to fact check the claims they were asserting that I had made.

3. This was the last that I heard from Reuters on this particular check...

RE: Reuters request for comment

reutersfactcheck@thomsonreuters.com <reutersfactcheckthomsonreuters.com@thomsonreuters.com>

Thu 10/21/2021 7:08 AM

To: Byram Bridle <bbridle@uoguelph.ca>; reutersfactcheck@thomsonreuters.com
<reutersfactcheckthomsonreuters.com@thomsonreuters.com>

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Dear Dr Bridle,

Thank you for sending on the selection of documents, which we have taken time to go through.

We will include comment from you and the references, and will ensure that the piece does not misrepresent what you said. We'll also send a copy when published.

Best regards,

Reuters Fact Check

I never received a copy of the 'fact' check and, to the best of my knowledge, it was never published. If true, why wouldn't they publish my science-supported rationale that showed that I know exactly what I am talking about and can back it up if allowed to have a conversation about it?

I'll let you answer that question.

Also, if anyone is aware of a place where this 'fact' check was posted, please provide the link in the comments section.

Summary

In short, these are key reasons why most experts of integrity will never bother to give any 'fact' checkers the time of day after their experience or two. We get treated disrespectfully and successful rebuttals don't seem to get reported. So, one quickly has to learn, as difficult as it is, to ignore these ploys and accept the reputation-bashing that will result. Otherwise, it would suck excessive time and energy out of our lives with no benefit arising from the effort.

So, I will never engage with a so-called 'fact' checker again because it is like farting in the wind. The effort goes completely unnoticed.

My conclusion: 'fact' checks stink.

