

The New York Times has a bias problem (No, it's not what you think)



New York, USA – June 7, 2014: Facade of the New York Times headquarters building on 8th Ave. in Midtown Manhattan. The building was completed in 2007. The New York Times is an American daily newspaper that was founded in 1851.

When I was in junior high school and was assigned a report for civics class, I remember going to the *New York Times* for an authoritative account of whatever important news story was breaking. When John F. Kennedy was assassinated, I distinctly recall the dignified coverage they gave to his funeral, which I was called upon to share with my classmates amid their distress. I'd scroll through old copies on microfilm to research history papers. It was the touchstone of journalistic excellence and objectivity.

But lately, politics aside, I've been outraged by the **anti-supplement bias** consistently reflected in the pages of the *Times*.

When it comes to politics, I have my own opinions. But I'm no political science major, and I have no experience in government, so I realize my views may be uninformed. Who am I to challenge the facts marshaled by professional journalists? Maybe I should stay in my lane, and leave it to the pros to adjudicate the political

controversies?

But supplements *are* in my wheelhouse. I've made it my profession to study them for the entirety of my medical career. It's heightened my clarity that the *Times* has issued a continuous drumbeat of negative stories about supplements over at least the past two decades—in direct contravention of the facts as I understand them.

Consider the following as a sampling of recent *Times* coverage of the supplement industry:

- Older Americans Are 'Hooked' on Vitamins (2018)
- Choose Foods, Not Supplements (2019)
- The Problem with Probiotics (2018)
- Multivitamins May Not Provide Heart Benefits (2018)
- Is it Time to Give Up on Fish Oil? (2018)
- Vitamin D and Fish Oils Are Ineffective for Preventing Cancer and Heart Disease (2018)
- Supplements Won't Prevent Dementia. But These Steps Might (2019)
- Studies Show Little Benefit in Supplements (2016)
- Opinion: Don't Take Your Vitamins (2013)
- Supplements for Coronavirus Probably Won't Help, and May Harm (2020)

Get the drift? I've pushed back on many of these unfair, one-sided *Times* articles in columns like this one: "*New York Times* columnist gets it wrong again about integrative and complementary medicine".

How is it that the *Times*, once a bastion of journalistic objectivity, appears to have become an uncritical echo-chamber for one side of the supplement controversy? It's been a long time coming, but the walls are coming down. A whistle-blowing *Times* editorial staffer, Bari Weiss, has revealed recently in a widely publicized resignation letter that:

"The paper of record is, more and more, the record of those living in a distant galaxy, one whose concerns are profoundly removed from the lives of most people . . . a new consensus has emerged in the press, but perhaps especially at this paper: that truth isn't a process of collective discovery, but an orthodoxy already known to an enlightened few whose job is to inform everyone else."

Of course, she was reporting on the "woke" orientation of political reporting at the *Times*, but I maintain that bias and groupthink extends to reporting about supplements, and indeed, relentless disparagement of the populist embrace of complementary methods of healing.

The *Times* is all for promoting healthy lifestyles via diet and exercise, but is "allergic" to anything that seems to align with the supplement industry. While touting drug breakthroughs, they're down on vitamins and nutraceuticals.

They're increasingly distant from average Americans, the majority of whom access natural therapies. Why is that so threatening? Maybe it's because the very notion of self-care undermines the authority of elite "experts", who in the *Times*' worldview, should be the sole arbiters of how we should conduct our lives. Dissent from the medical mainstream, they contend, is the province of the unenlightened. It's

downright patronizing.

One can't help believing that the insular journalists on the *Times* health beat are in thrall to the promise of high-tech medicine; their opinions are likely molded by prominent orthodox physicians and pharmaceutical executives. It's the medical establishment. What's "progressive" about that?

Conflict-of-interest is rife when journalists are handed "camera-ready" press releases about medical breakthroughs, essentially writing their stories for them, with a drug company slant; pop-up ads touting hospitals or medications routinely appear next to health articles. Lots of breezy sendups of medical advances are successfully "planted" by public relations agencies. The supplement industry can't compete on that scale.

As Jarrow Rogovin wrote in a rebuttal to a *Times* article impugning the quality of herbal supplements: *"Historically, the Times has been a lopsided critic of supplements for at least 25 years, and this negative attitude apparently prevails throughout the institution . . . The NYT promotes itself as a source of truthful, accurate, fair, and balanced reporting. Appropriately, the position of the Public Editor was created to examine whether your newspaper's own reporting, stylistic, and ethical guidelines are being followed, and to facilitate a dialogue between the paper's readers and reporters . . . [the article] presents a completely one-sided view, casting doubt on supplement safety and quality in every sentence."*

[In a much-criticized move, the *Times* eliminated the above-referenced position of Public Editor a couple of years ago. There's now even less internal oversight over its content.]

To make matters worse, the *Times* sets the tone for health reporting in other media. It is widely quoted, and its viewpoints reverberate throughout the journalistic echo chamber.

The *Times* claims to be a champion of "diversity". Regardless of what you think of the *Times'* politics, maybe it's time for the newspaper to encourage some more inclusiveness in its health reporting; they're out of touch with millions of Americans, many of whom, like you, embrace natural medicine. Is it right for them to be continually hectored and scolded, like children, by haughty "experts" at the *Times*?

Read about conflicts of interest in health journalism [here](#).