naturalnews.com

A network of sites promoting both medical and non-medical conspiracy theories, particularly the false claim that vaccines are linked to autism.

Ownership and Financing

The exact ownership of NaturalNews.com is unclear. News articles in The New Republic and Mic.com have named founder and editor Mike Adams as the owner. Adams is described on the site as an "activist-turned-scientist" who claims to have cured himself of type 2 diabetes using natural remedies. However, the site does not explicitly name him as its owner. The site's copyright notice mentions both The Natural News Network and Truth in Publishing, Ltd. An older version of the site's About page said the Natural News Network was a "non-profit collection of public education websites" owned by Taiwan-based Truth in Publishing.

The Natural News Network appears to be made up of more than 200 websites that aggregate stories from NaturalNews.com related to a particular topic. For example, Pandemic.news includes headlines about the Wuhan coronavirus that redirect to NaturalNews.com. Sites in the network are connected through shared advertising accounts and IP addresses.

The site carries advertising. It also sells products such as dietary supplements and so-called "superfoods" through Adams’ Health Ranger store. Many products are labeled as having been verified by the Consumer Wellness Center, a nonprofit group affiliated with Natural News for which Adams serves as executive director.

Content

The site's About page describes Natural News as a "science-based natural health advocacy organization." Much of the articles combine reporting from other websites and scientific journals with the site's commentary.

Articles are often critical of government policy related to vaccinations, running under headlines such as "Florida now following California in force toxic, deadly vaccines onto millions of children." Articles are also critical of Democrats, liberals, and the press — such as "Top 10 TRUTH topics you never hear or see on lame-stream MSM media." The site also runs summaries of research promoting lifestyle changes or natural supplements to lower the risk of various diseases.

The site's Special Reports section includes longer articles and guides promoting the site's stance on health and medicine topics, with titles such as "Breast Cancer Deception" and "The Healing Power of Water." The site also publishes political cartoons and has a section dedicated to songs and music videos by Adams, with titles such as "Vaccine Zombie" and "Just Say No to GMO."

Credibility

NaturalNews.com regularly publishes false and misleading claims related to vaccines and to other medical issues, as well as to nonmedical matters.

In January 2020, the site promoted false and unsubstantiated claims about the coronavirus outbreak, which originated in China and prompted the World Health Organization to declare a global health emergency.

For example, the site that month published an article titled "Eugenist Bill Gates co-hosted a ‘high-level pandemic exercise’ back in October, just in time for the patented coronavirus he helped fund to be unleashed." The article tied the Microsoft co-founder to the outbreak, implying that he was somehow responsible for it. According to the story, "the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation-funded Pillbright Institute owns a patent on coronavirus for vaccine creation purposes. Was this whole outbreak engineered for the purpose of scaring the general public into accepting yet another government vaccine?"

The article provided no evidence to back its claim that the outbreak was "engineered." The Gates Foundation did participate in a simulated..."
Another January 2020 article was titled "Is coronavirus a manufactured bioweapon that Chinese spies stole from Canada? Relying on a story first published by the site GreatGameIndia.com and republished by ZeroHedge.com, a site NewsGuard found to repeatedly publish false content, the article said, "Reports reveal that these Chinese agents were working undercover for the Chinese Biological Warfare Program, and may have infiltrated North America for the sole purpose of hijacking this deadly virus in order to unleash it at a later date."

The Natural News article, quoting the original story from GreatGameIndia.com, claimed that two Chinese scientists, who were escorted out of the National Microbiology Lab (NML) in Winnipeg, Canada in July 2019, were actually Chinese spies who shipped the coronavirus to a lab in Wuhan, China. According to a January 2020 article published by the Canadian Broadcasting Corp., the two were escorted from a lab because of an investigation that Public Health Agency Canada (PHAC) described as a "policy breach" and "administrative manner."

PolitiFact, FactCheck.org, and the CBC all concluded that there was no evidence behind the claim that the coronavirus strain responsible for the 2020 outbreak was stolen by Chinese spies from a Canadian lab. PHAC spokesperson Eric Morissette told the CBC in January 2020 that there was no connection between the two scientists being escorted from the Winnipeg lab in July 2019 and the coronavirus outbreak. "This is misinformation and there is no factual basis for claims being made on social media," Morissette said.

Multiple articles on NaturalNews.com have claimed that a link exists between vaccinations and the development of autism — a claim that has been repeatedly debunked by federal agencies and health and science authorities.

For example, a January 2020 article claimed that "vaccines truly are the culprit of the autism epidemic in this country. Vaccine scientists know this." A January 2019 article stated: "The huge volume of circumstantial evidence of the link between vaccines and autism is more than enough to prove that vaccines do indeed cause autism."

A February 2019 article, headlined "Abandoning science in favor of coercion, FDA pharma mob bosses demand U.S. states eliminate vaccine exemptions... or else," falsely claimed that children become autistic hours after being vaccinated because "the vaccines cause the autism, of course — a simple, biological fact the vaccine industry desperately hopes you never discover."

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and many other health and science authorities, including the U.K. National Health Service and the World Health Organization, have repeatedly stated that there is no link between vaccines and autism, based on an abundance of scientific evidence.

The site has also published false information about measles and vaccines. A January 2019 article said that of 26 children reported infected with measles in Washington state, "most of them were already vaccinated," which the article presented as evidence that "vaccines don't work." The article provided no data to back this assertion.

According to the Washington State Department of Health, 67 of the 87 confirmed measles cases in the state in 2019 involved unvaccinated individuals. Five cases of measles were reported among individuals who received one dose of the measles vaccine and another four cases involved people who had received two doses of the vaccine, as recommended by the CDC. The immunization status for the remaining 11 cases had not been verified.

Natural News has also promoted debunked conspiracy theories outside of medicine. The site's articles have falsely claimed that President Barack Obama's birth certificate was a forgery ("Unhinged Democrats now fixated on President Trump's body weight, but they never cared about Obama's counterfeit birth certificate," published in January 2018); that murdered Democratic National Committee staff member Seth Rich had sent DNC emails to WikiLeaks ("DNC bombshell: Murdered staffer Seth Rich sent THOUSANDS of emails to WikiLeaks, undermining entire bogus story that Russia hacked election," posted in
September 2017); and that the pipe bombs sent to Democratic politicians and news organizations in October 2018 were a hoax ("Fake pipe bomb hoaxer arrested; obvious signs of a CIA false flag operation to shift electron narrative to blaming Trump supporters").

Because Natural News has repeatedly promoted false and widely debunked claims in its articles and headlines, NewsGuard has determined that the site has repeatedly published false content, fails to gather and present information responsibly, and does not avoid deceptive headlines.

The site’s contact form offers an option to suggest a correction. On occasion, the site has explained why it has removed articles, based on readers’ requests for a correction. However, because multiple articles making false claims remain on the site, uncorrected, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not meet the standard for correcting errors.

The site does not disclose a political orientation or agenda, but articles frequently praise U.S. President Donald Trump and take aim at his critics. For example, a December 2019 article credited to site owner Mike Adams stated, "President Trump has just been (sort of) impeached by a hyena pack of drooling, fanatical Democrats who couldn’t even cite a single criminal violation in their wholly fabricated, imaginary articles of impeachment."

In another December 2019 article by Adams, he posited possible scenarios that would ignite a civil war, saying, “What’s apparent to every thinking person now is that the radical Left only wants to tear down civil society, not participate in peaceful coexistence.” Addressing the possibility that President Trump could invoke martial law, Adams wrote: “We should welcome such action, but it is sure to set off a violent uprising among radical Leftists who will use the opportunity to bomb buildings, set fire to their own cities and attempt the mass murder of conservatives and Trump supporters.”

An article credited to Adams that was first published in September 2018 and updated in February 2019 was titled “EMERGENCY REPORT: Signed Executive Orders reveal Trump is planning mass arrests, military tribunals for deep state traitors like Comey, Clinton and Obama.” The article mixes false claims such as saying the U.S. “has been operating under a declared national emergency, signed by President Trump, since December 20, 2017,” with a call for President Trump to declare temporary martial law to “allow deep state traitors to be arrested by military police.”

Because Natural News does not disclose its point of view and regularly includes opinionated statements in its articles, NewsGuard has determined that it does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

Natural News did not respond to NewsGuard’s three emails, including one sent in January 2020, and a phone call seeking comment on its history of publishing false claims, its approach to corrections, and its handling of the difference between news and opinion.

**Transparency**

The site does not explicitly name Mike Adams, the Natural News Network, or Truth in Publishing, Ltd. as the site’s owner.

Adams appears to be the only content creator on the site with a biography, which names him as the site’s “founding editor.” The About page discloses that Natural News is led by Adams. The names of other writers are generally included in stories, but no biographical or contact information is provided.

The Media Info page includes a phone number to schedule media appearances and interviews with Adams.

Advertisements are not clearly labeled. Articles on the site often promote health benefits for products sold by Adams through his Health Ranger Store, then include links to buy those products within the body of the story without disclosing that Adams owns the store.

For example, a September 2019 story titled “Iodine is a crucial trace mineral that’s necessary for optimal health,” ended with a paragraph directing readers to buy iodine from Adams’ store. “Health Ranger Select Nascent Iodine delivers 400 mcg of elemental iodine per 1-drop serving, providing an incredibly easy way for you to get your daily iodine intake,” the article stated. “While all sources of dietary iodine are beneficial, Health Ranger’s Nascent Iodine has the smallest drops and lowest surface tension of any iodine product we’ve tested so far.”
Other sites in the Natural News Network do not include any information about the owner, editors, or content creators. Nor do the sites make clear their connection to NaturalNews.com.

Natural News did not respond to three emails, including one sent in January 2020, and a phone call seeking comment about its blurring of advertising and editorial content, the lack of an explicit disclosure of ownership, and the lack of information about content creators.

History

The site was launched as NewsTarget.com in 2003.

Editor's Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on Feb. 26, 2020. Previously, the label was updated updated to reflect that upon further review, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not meet the standard for disclosing ownership. The criteria checklist was adjusted accordingly.

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Send feedback to NewsGuard: Click Here

Sources

Ownership and Financing

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Credibility

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Vaccine/autism story #2: http://archive.org/xxrSDd
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