healthnutnews.com

A site dedicated to alternative medicine that originated a false conspiracy theory about the deaths of holistic doctors.

Ownership and Financing

The site is owned by Erin Elizabeth, an advocate for alternative medicine who has said her regimen has helped her recover from Lyme Disease and “vaccine injury.” The site is supported by advertisements and sales from Elizabeth’s line of health products and supplements.

Before founding HealthNutNews.com, Elizabeth was a contributor to Mercola.com, a site run by alternative medicine practitioner Dr. Joseph Mercola that NewsGuard found to have repeatedly published false content. Mercola and Elizabeth are a couple and have spoken publicly on their beliefs that support alternative remedies and criticize traditional medicine and vaccines.

Content

HealthNutNews.com publishes news related to alternative medicine. The site’s sections include Environment, Recipes, and Politics. The Health section includes separate pages for Natural Health, Fitness, and Beauty.


Credibility

Most of the content on HealthNutNews.com is republished from sites such as Mercola.com, GreenMedInfo.com, and ChildrensHealthDefense.org, which NewsGuard found to have repeatedly published false content.

HealthNutNews.com is the originator of unfounded claims that since 2015, the pharmaceutical industry has caused the deaths of more than 90 holistic doctors, alternative medicine practitioners, and those with connections to pharmaceutical companies.

An original HealthNutNews.com article titled “Unintended Holistic Doctor Death Series: Over 90 Dead,” first published in March 2016 and updated in March 2019, included a tally of these deaths, beginning with the 2015 death of North Carolina physician Jeff Bradstreet, who believed vaccines caused autism and claimed autism could be cured by injecting patients with protein shots.

While Bradstreet’s family has said in interviews on HealthNutNews.com that they believe Bradstreet was murdered, authorities in Rutherford County, North Carolina, said that Bradstreet killed himself. According to The Washington Post, Bradstreet’s clinic was raided by federal and state authorities the day before he was found dead of a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Both PolitiFact.com and Snopes.com have reported that there is no evidence to support the theory that Bradstreet was one of dozens of doctors who died at the hands of the pharmaceutical industry because of their holistic practices. Snopes examined the police reports for the deaths included in Elizabeth’s list in May 2017 — when it stood at 51 deaths — and found that Elizabeth’s list included non-suspicious deaths, including the deaths of three holistic medical practitioners who had heart attacks. Elizabeth also included 10 people on her list who had no clear connection to natural or alternative medicine.

The site has repeatedly published stories promoting the widely debunked theory that vaccinations can lead to autism. For example, a June 2019 article titled “Could these studies show a link between vaccines and autism?” claimed that there are “30 studies that show a link between vaccines and autism.”

In fact, none of the studies cited in the article showed that vaccines cause autism. 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.

Despite the abundance of scientific evidence debunking the vaccine-autism link, HealthNutNews.com has regularly promoted it as proven fact. For example, an April 2018 article headlined “Here we go again: More vaccine-autism denialism,” stated “Despite extensive high-level scientific fraud at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to suppress evidence of a vaccine-autism link, the CDC has not been able to hide over 80 independent studies that connect the dots between the vaccine preservative thimerosal and autism.” In a December 2017 article titled “Countering false vaccine safety claims” the site stated, “Vaccines can and do cause serious injuries including autism.”

HealthNutNews.com has also promoted unsubstantiated and potentially dangerous health treatments. In a February 2020 article titled “What Is Colloidal Silver?,” the site claimed that there are a variety of benefits to using colloidal silver, which is a liquid product containing small silver particles. “Colloidal silver is used to help alleviate various health conditions such as sinus infection, pink eye, Gram-positive and Gram-negative bacteria, eczema, herpes and ear infections,” the article stated. “It may reduce your risk of cancer by triggering cancer cell death.” The HealthNutNews.com article does mention that a possible side effect of using colloidal silver is a permanent, bluish-gray discoloration of the skin called argyria.

The National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, part of the U.S. National Institutes of Health, says on its website that “scientific evidence doesn’t support the use of colloidal silver dietary supplements for any disease or condition.”

A February 2020 article titled “Novel Coronavirus — The Latest Pandemic Scare,” republished on HealthNutNews.com from Mercola.com, suggested the source of the Wuhan coronavirus outbreak was a Chinese government-run laboratory in Wuhan, China. “In January 2018, China’s first maximum security virology laboratory (biosafety level 4) designed for the study of the world’s most dangerous pathogens opened its doors — in Wuhan,” the article said. “Is it pure coincidence that Wuhan City is now the epicenter of this novel coronavirus infection?”

While it is true that a lab at the Wuhan Institute of Virology works with dangerous pathogens, there is no evidence backing the suggestion that the new strain of coronavirus came from that lab. A February 2020 study published in the journal Nature found that the virus is “98% percent identical at the whole-genome level to a bat coronavirus.”

The article also suggested that the outbreak was timed to coincide with discussions about the U.S. federal budget. “January and February appear to be a favorite time to launch a global disease scare with the dutiful assistance of corporatized media,” the article said. “It’s convenient, seeing how usually by the first Monday in February every year (Feb. 3, 2020), the president sends the U.S. Congress the administration’s budget requesting funds to be allocated to federal agencies for the next fiscal year’s budget (Oct. 1, 2020 - Sept. 30, 2021). Each time there’s a public health scare, the Pharma and public health lobby is able to vie for a larger slice of taxpayer money to pay for drug and vaccine development.”

Because HealthNutNews.com has repeatedly promoted false health claims and unfounded conspiracies in its articles and headlines, NewsGuard has determined it has repeatedly published false content, fails to gather and present information responsibly, and does not avoid deceptive headlines.

The website does not articulate its policy for correcting errors. NewsGuard found three corrections on the site published between March 2019 and March 2020, with notes attached to the article. However, because HealthNutNews.com has failed to correct many other false claims on the website, NewsGuard has determined the site does not meet NewsGuard’s standard for regularly correcting errors.

The site’s About page says that Erin Elizabeth has “a passion for the healing arts” and mentions that she has spoken to “tens of thousands of holistic doctors.” But the website does not clearly disclose the site’s pro-alternative medicine, anti-vaccine perspective, which appears in most of its articles, which is why NewsGuard has determined that the website fails to handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

For example, a February 2020 article headlined “How the CDC Combats”
Health Freedom Through Front Groups” stated that, “While the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is supposed to be an independent organization watching out for public health, it has repeatedly demonstrated that it is working on behalf of the drug industry.” The article added, “it seems the CDC is actively undermining vaccine exemptions and civil liberties, including freedom of thought, conscience and religious belief.”

Elizabeth’s articles have directly advocated for political candidates, such as a November 2018 article urging support for Eric Frame, an independent candidate for California’s state Senate who opposed mandatory vaccinations for children attending public schools.

HealthNutNews.com did not respond to three messages sent by NewsGuard through its contact form, including one sent in March 2020, and a telephone call seeking comment on the website’s history of promoting false health claims, its approach to corrections, and its failure to disclose a pro-alternative medicine perspective.

Transparency

The site’s ownership by Elizabeth is clear. Her name appears above the site’s logo on every page: “Erin Elizabeth’s Health Nut News.” Her biography on the site identifies her as its founder, but the site does not identify her or anyone else as the website’s chief editor.

The site provides a general contact form for users.

The site’s original articles are generally credited to Elizabeth. Articles that are republished from other sources note that they were “Posted” by Elizabeth, and generally identify the original author before or after the article, which meets NewsGuard’s standard for providing information about content creators.

The site often inserts unlabeled advertisements for Elizabeth’s products within related news stories. For example, a February 2020 article titled “What’s in Children’s Drinking Water? Far Too Often, Something Neurotoxic” includes an advertisement for a water purifier sold through Elizabeth’s store.

An October 2019 story headlined “Why You Should Never Buy CBD Oil From Amazon” begins with a note from Elizabeth promoting her own CBD- or cannabidiol- products. “We are proud to have our own raw, organic “Seed to Shelf” CBD line - all the way from the seed to your store front or door! Find it here and help support the mission!”

HealthNutNews.com did not respond to three messages sent by NewsGuard through its contact form, including one sent in March 2020, and a telephone call seeking comment on the site’s lack of information about editorial leaders, and about its failure to label articles promoting Elizabeth’s products as ads.

History

The site’s domain name was registered in November 2013. The earliest stories on the site date to January 2014.

Editor’s Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on March 3, 2020. Its rating was changed to reflect NewsGuard’s determination that, contrary to an earlier version of this label, HealthNutNews.com meets NewsGuard’s standard for providing information about content creators. The criteria checklist has been adjusted accordingly.

Written by: John Gregory
Contributing: Chandler Kidd
Edited by: Jim Warren, Amy Westfield

Send feedback to NewsGuard: Click Here

Sources

Ownership and Financing

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