

The website of Italian blogger Claudio Messora, which has published false and unsubstantiated health claims, including about the 2020 coronavirus pandemic.



Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic standards of credibility and transparency.

Score: 20/100

Ownership and Financing

The site is owned by ByoBlu Edizioni Srls, a private company based in Milan, which, according to documents provided by the Italian Business Registry, is owned by Messora. Messora served as a former communication consultant for the anti-establishment Five Star Movement until 2014.

The site solicits donations from its readers and sells subscriptions to its content through the site and its YouTube channel.

ByoBlu.com does not publish advertisements.

Content

ByoBlu.com, which describes itself as “Claudio Messora’s video blog,” combines short articles with video reports by ByoBlu staff and commentary by Messora. Content is organized into sections such as Front Page (Primo Piano), News, Paths (Percorsi), Social, and Video Archive (Archivio Video). News is organized by topics including Politics (Politica), Economy (Economia), Conflicts (Conflitti), Society (Società) and Science (Scienza).

Typical headlines include “Eat well to strengthen the immune system - Pietro Mozzi - #Byoblu24” (“Mangiare bene per rafforzare il sistema immunitario - Pietro Mozzi - #Byoblu24”); “Freedom for all Italian thinkers against the task force of the regime - Massimo Mazzucco” (“Libertà per tutti i liberi pensatori italiani contro le task force di regime - Massimo Mazzucco”); “The gagged scientific research: Stefano Montanari and Antonietta Gatti” (“La ricerca imbavagliata: Stefano Montanari e Antonietta Gatti”).

Credibility

The site has repeatedly published unsubstantiated medical claims, including false information about the COVID-19 pandemic.

For example, in a March 2020 video interview published on ByoBlu.com about the coronavirus outbreak, Italian researcher Stefano Montanari said, "Healthy people suffer absolutely no harm from this virus" (“Le persone sane non subiscono assolutamente nessun danno da questo virus”), and "The virus mortality is very low,

- ✗ Does not repeatedly publish false content (22points)
- ✗ Gathers and presents information responsibly (18)
- ✗ Regularly corrects or clarifies errors (12.5)
- ✗ Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly (12.5)
- ✗ Avoids deceptive headlines (10)
- ✓ Website discloses ownership and financing (7.5)
- Clearly labels advertising (7.5)
- ✓ Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest (5)
- ✗ The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information (5)

Criteria are listed in order of importance.

[More information.](#)

probably even nonexistent" ("La mortalità da virus è bassissima, probabilmente addirittura inesistente"). Montanari, citing the National Institute of Health (ISS) as a source, also said that only three people had died of COVID-19 in Italy as of March 18, 2020.

The National Institute of Health never said that only three people had died of COVID-19 as of March 18. In a press release on that date, the institute's president, Silvio Brusaferro, said that after looking at reports of the deaths of 2,003 people who died of COVID-19, the institute found that only three of those victims had no known previous health conditions. As of April 16, 2020, 22,170 Italians overall had died as a result of the COVID-19 virus.

In another March 2020 video, Montanari said that the term herd immunity "is the most brilliant invention of the pharmaceutical industry. Herd immunity does not exist, it's a scam" ("L'immunità di gregge è l'invenzione più brillante dell'industria farmaceutica. L'immunità di gregge non esiste, è una truffa").

Scientific literature dating to the 1920s has provided evidence supporting herd immunity, explaining how the spread of a contagious disease can be limited when enough of the population gains immunity through previous infections or vaccination. According to a September 2011 study in the *Scandinavian Journal of Infectious Diseases*, herd immunity "has had a major impact in the eradication of smallpox, has reduced transmission of pertussis, and protects against influenza and pneumococcal disease."

On March 25, 2020, Patto Trasversale per la Scienza, a group that tracks hoaxes and false medical claims, said that it had reported Montanari, along with the websites that published his interviews, to prosecutors in Modena and Ancona "for the serious claims on the spread, containment and treatment of SARS-CoV-2 and the disease COVID-19 and for the anti-vaccination conspiracy theories in various videos and interviews." ("per le gravi affermazioni sulla diffusione, contenimento e cura del SARS-CoV-2 e della malattia COVID-19 e per le tesi complottistiche anti-vaccinali, contenute in vari video ed interviste dello stesso").

Messora replied with a video, posted on ByoBlu.com, saying, "we will not remove that video ... if the country you want is this one, here it is" ("non lo rimuoviamo ... se l'Italia che volete è questa, sostanzialmente, tenetevela").

In February 2020, ByoBlu.com published a video interview headlined: “Coronavirus, Panzironi: the government should give Vitamin C and D for free to strengthen people’s immune system” (“Coronavirus, Panzironi: lo stato regali vitamina C e D per potenziare il sistema immunitario”).

In the interview, Adriano Panzironi, a journalist who promotes dietary supplements, discussed how the use of vitamins C and D could prevent the COVID-19 virus.

On April 14, 2020, Agcom, the Italian Authority for Communications Guarantees, ordered that Panzironi’s television programs be suspended because of “the diffusion of contents potentially liable to endanger the health of users as causes of an underestimation of the potential risks connected to the COVID-19 virus and of the erroneous belief that the virus itself can be treated or prevented with non-therapeutic measures, but with food or supplements” (“la diffusione di contenuti, commerciali e non, potenzialmente suscettibili di porre in pericolo la salute degli utenti in quanto induttivi di una sottovalutazione dei rischi potenziali connessi al virus Covid-19 e dell’erroneo convincimento che lo stesso virus possa essere trattato o prevenuto con misure non terapeutiche, ma alimentari o di mera integrazione”).

Although the video featuring Panzironi’s interview was removed from ByoBlu.com after Agcom’s ruling, an article attached to it and found on the site as of April 2020 said, “How to strengthen the immune system to help prevention and to deal with the symptoms ... The state should give Vitamin C and Vitamin D for free to the whole population” (“Come potenziare il sistema immunitario per aiutare la prevenzione, per fronteggiare cioè l’insorgere dei sintomi? ... Lo Stato dovrebbe regalare Vitamina C e Vitamina D a tutta la popolazione”).

As of early 2020, Vitamin C was being studied as a treatment of COVID-19 in several clinical trials. However, there is currently no credible evidence that high doses of Vitamin C can slow or stop the disease. The World Health Organization and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have said that there is no specific treatment recommended for the coronavirus strain responsible for the 2020 outbreak.

ByoBlu.com has also promoted the false claim about a connection between vaccines and autism. A 2019 video interview with former doctor Andrew Wakefield promoted

a study that had been retracted in 1998, which sought to establish a connection between the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine and autism.

The Wakefield study, which only involved 12 participants, has been refuted by numerous other studies. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has said on its website, “There is no link between vaccine and autism,” citing multiple, controlled, peer-reviewed studies. Wakefield was banned from practicing medicine in the U.K. in 2010.

Because ByoBlu.com frequently publishes false and unsubstantiated health claims, NewsGuard has determined that the site repeatedly publishes false content, does not gather and present information responsibly, and does not avoid the use of deceptive headlines.

The site does not have a dedicated section for opinion. However, the website’s News section frequently includes opinionated content, which is why NewsGuard has determined that the website fails to handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

For example, in a video published in the News section in April 2020, Italian blogger Massimo Mazzucco criticized mainstream news outlets, including Rai and La7, as well as Italian task forces that were created to fight misinformation, saying, “The pincer of censorship is about to tighten on the internet and on the voices of free information” (“la tenaglia della censura sta per stringersi sulla rete e sulle voci della libera informazione”).

In an April 2020 article published in the News section and headlined “The clear dictatorship” (“La dittatura conclamata”), the author referred to Italian Government as “a dictatorship”.

The site does not publish a corrections policy, and NewsGuard did not find any corrections on the site.

NewsGuard sent two messages seeking comment on the site’s editorial practices, lack of corrections, and failure to distinguish news and opinion, but it did not receive a response.

Transparency ByoBlu.com identifies the website at the top and the bottom of the homepage as “The Video Blog of Claudio Messori” (“Il Video blog di Claudio Messori”), which meets NewsGuard’s standards for revealing ownership and revealing who is in charge. Users can reach the site through a contact form at the bottom of the homepage.

While articles generally are attributed to authors, the website does not provide biographical or contact information for them.

NewsGuard sent two messages seeking comment on the lack of information about the site’s content creators, but it did not receive a response.

The site does not publish advertisements.

History The domain was registered in 2002.

In January 2017 Google banned ByoBlu.com from its advertising platform AdSense for violating its policies on deceptive content. Messori published an article on ByoBlu.com in response, blaming the decision on “the effects of the campaign against the so-called ‘fake news’ (but in reality with the aim of hitting free and independent information).” (“ma in realtà con l’obiettivo di colpire l’informazione libera e indipendente”).

Messori blamed the campaign against misinformation on a number of U.S. and foreign leaders, including former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton; Laura Boldrini, former president of the Chamber of Deputies in Italy; German Chancellor Angela Merkel; and the European parliament.

Written by: [Virginia Padovese](#)

Edited by: [Jim Warren](#), [Amy Westfeldt](#), [Giampiero Gramaglia](#)

Send feedback to NewsGuard:[Click Here](#)

Sources

Ownership and
Financing

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Credibility

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Transparency

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