

madworldnews.com

A conservative opinion website publishing stories on politics, religion, gun rights, and other topics. The site has published misleading information, including about COVID-19.



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

Score: 37.5/100

Ownership and Financing

Mad World News is owned by a Pennsylvania couple, Corey and Christy Pepple, through the company Mad World News, LLC. Previously, the Pepples used pseudonyms on the site, but they publicly identified themselves in an October 2018 interview with The New York Times and now are identified by their real names on the About Us page.

When NewsGuard contacted Christy Pepple in June 2018, she declined to speak on the record about the site and later did not respond to an email with another interview request.

Content

The site states on the About Us page that the Pepples founded the site “to share their thoughts on current issues through their worldview as Christian Conservatives.” According to the mission statement: “From exposing the shocking falsehoods that we see in the news to revealing our perceptions and even speculation derived from the facts at hand, our news commentary pieces, presented by our various opinion columnists of different backgrounds, allow the reader to consider a different perspective than what’s presented by the liberal media.”

The site’s stories typically express criticism of liberals, Muslims, undocumented immigrants, and alleged criminals. Typical articles on the site have run under headlines such as “Pelosi & Cohorts Take ‘Full Pay’ Leave As Americans Face Coming Food Shortages,” “Clapper Gets Utterly Torched For Claiming He Doesn’t Know Why He Unmasked Flynn,” and “Midler: Trump’s Overwhelming Jealousy Of Obama Will Kill Us All – Gets Smackdown.”

-  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.](#)

Mad World News has made numerous distorted or misleading claims. For example, in an April 2020 story, titled “Fauci Resurfaces: NIH Panel Recommends Against Drug Combo Promoted By Trump For COVID-19,” the site stated that Anthony Fauci of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases is pushing “sinister plans to ‘set up’ President Donald Trump” by not recommending the anti-malarial drug hydroxychloroquine as a treatment for COVID-19. “More likely, it’s Dr. Fauci’s connection to Bill Gates that is pushing the NIH to make this highly-suspect recommendation against hydroxychloroquine,” the article stated.

There is no evidence backing these claims.

The article also made misleading claims about the drug’s safety. “The truth is hydroxychloroquine has been around for 70 years and the incidence of heart issues is extremely rare,” the article stated, adding, “why the harsh response to hydroxychloroquine which has shown such promise in multiple studies?”

In fact, the drug has not been shown to be an effective treatment for COVID-19 in “multiple studies.” Although an early French study of the drug from March 2020 appeared to have promising results, the study drew significant criticism for its small sample size and the misleading presentation of its results, which did not make clear that three patients on the drug required intensive care and one died.

Later studies have raised concerns about use of the drug to treat COVID-19. For example, a March 2020 study conducted in China found that the drug was not more effective for 15 COVID-19 patients than a regimen of bed rest, supplemental oxygen, and antiviral drugs. An April 2020 study of military veterans by researchers from the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Universities of South Carolina and Virginia said that it “found no evidence that use of hydroxychloroquine, either with or without azithromycin, reduced the risk of mechanical ventilation in patients hospitalized with

Covid-19. An association of increased overall mortality was identified in patients treated with hydroxychloroquine alone.”

Asked about this article, site co-owner Corey Pepple told NewsGuard in an email, “If any studies were ignored, it was because they were faulty.” He added that he believed the Veterans Affairs study was not reliable because it was focused on an elderly population.

In an April 2020 story, headlined “Fauci Caught ‘Thanking’ ABC Reporter Who Invited Chinese Journalist To Attack Trump,” the site reported that during a White House Press Briefing, ABC’s Jonathan Karl “brought in a Chinese Communist Party ‘journalist’ who proceeded to attack the president. However, more disturbing is Dr. Anthony Fauci who was caught signaling the ABC reporter as the presser ended.” According to the article, “after Fauci deliberately ensured he was the last person to exit the stage, he attempted the sly signal of a ‘job well done’ in return to the salute he received from Jonathan Karl.”

The article was referring to a reporter from Phoenix Media, a Hong Kong-based publication that is partially owned by the Chinese government. As evidence that Fauci “thanked” Karl, the article pointed to a tweet with a video of Fauci’s exit from the briefing. The video shows Fauci leaving the briefing room and pointing toward the back of the room. Although Karl was seated closest to the exit, it does not seem clear that the gesture was directed at Karl, let alone that the signal was an expression of gratitude.

Asked about this story, Pepple told NewsGuard: “There is no evidence that Fauci’s hand motion wasn’t directed at Karl. We are an opinion blog, as previously stated. That was the opinion of our opinion columnist.”

In another April 2020 story, the site stated that Microsoft co-founder and philanthropist Bill Gates “has already developed technology to track those who will get the COVID vaccine” as part of a “sinister agenda” to restrict

the freedoms of Americans. It is true that Gates has said that “digital certificates” could be used as part of a larger vaccination effort, but there is no evidence that he or his foundation has created technology to “track those who will get the COVID vaccine.” Digital certificates are used to send encrypted information online, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation told Reuters: “The reference to ‘digital certificates’ relates to efforts to create an open source digital platform with the goal of expanding access to safe, home-based testing.”

After NewsGuard inquired about this article, it was removed from the site. The article did not include a corrections notice or editor’s note to readers reporting the change.

Older stories with false and misleading claims previously cited by NewsGuard remain on the site.

For example, in March 2017, the site published a false story widely shared in conservative media saying that three Syrian refugees had raped at knife-point a girl in Twin Falls, Idaho. The story was debunked by multiple news organizations and fact-checking organizations, and the Twin Falls County Prosecutor issued a statement saying: “There was no gang rape, there were no Syrians involved and there was no knife. None of it is true.” The site has not retracted or corrected the story.

Mad World News has also published stories promoting debunked conspiracy theories. Articles have frequently referenced the disproven “Clinton Body Count” conspiracy theory, which suggests that Bill and Hillary Clinton were somehow responsible for the deaths of various figures who suffered untimely or suspicious deaths. Most recently, in July 2018, the site raised questions about the connection between a deceased New York woman and Hillary Clinton. The fact-checking organization PolitiFact found no basis to suggest a connection, which NewsGuard corroborated.

Headlines on the site are often emotive, provocative, and misleading. For example, a May 2020 story, titled “Biden Named ‘Perpetrator Of A Crime’ By Judge – Obama Official Lied Under Oath,” does not make it clear that the judge in question is Ukrainian, not American.

Another May 2020 story stated in a headline, “Racist Cover-Up After Man Videos Himself Beating Disabled Nursing Home Patients.” The article discusses a video of a black man assaulting a white nursing home patient, but offers no evidence that it was a racially motivated crime nor that there has been a “cover-up.”

Because Mad World News has published inaccurate and misleading claims, including about discredited conspiracy theories, NewsGuard has determined that the site has repeatedly published false content, does not gather and present news responsibly, and does not avoid deceptive headlines.

The site states on an About Us page that it seeks to “allow the reader to consider a different perspective than what’s presented by the liberal media.” It also labels each story with an opinion label. Therefore, NewsGuard has determined that the site handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

Mad World News includes a corrections policy on its About Us page, stating that “we commit to hastily correcting our errors so that our readers can get the real story. The prominence of our correction will be commensurate with the gravity of the error. Typos and minor corrections will be corrected without fanfare. Other corrections may be noted at the bottom of the article, and major factual corrections may be noted at the top.”

However, NewsGuard did not find any examples of corrected stories on the site, and the false claims cited above were not corrected. Therefore, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not meet the standard for regularly issuing corrections.

Transparency Mad World News states on the About Us page that it was founded and is owned by Corey and Christie Pepple. They are also listed as the site's editorial leaders.

Most stories appear to be written by a single author, for whom biographical information is provided on an author page.

Advertising is distinguished from editorial content.

History Mad World News was created in 2013.

Editor's Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on May 22, 2020, to reflect that NewsGuard has determined that the site now handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly, and that it provides information about ownership, editorial leaders, and content creators. The criteria checklist has been adjusted accordingly.

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Sources

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