

# theweeklyobserver.com

A website that has repeatedly published fabricated stories about celebrity deaths. The site's content was no longer online as of May 2020, after it published false stories related to the COVID-19 pandemic.



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

**Score: 20/100**

## Ownership and Financing

A man who identified himself as Anastasios Magas told NewsGuard that he owns the website.

The site runs advertisements.

## Content

The Weekly Observer says on an About Us page that it “monitors and reports on the latest breaking news from around the web. Our dedicated reporters provide researched content that appeals to our readers.”

Sections on the site include Entertainment, World, US, Technology, Health, Cryptocurrency, Science, and Viral Videos. The site also has a section dedicated to the automotive industry and Formula 1 racing called Auto-Moto.

## Credibility

The Weekly Observer has repeatedly published fabricated stories about celebrities dying or being hospitalized. For example, an April 2020 article headlined “Ozzy Osbourne singer, of Black Sabbath, dead at 71 of coronavirus,” falsely claimed that Osbourne had died of COVID-19 and featuring statements from other musicians paying tribute to him. Osbourne had not died or been diagnosed with COVID-19, and the quotes included in the story were all fabricated.

In January 2020, the site published an article titled, “Kobe Bryant’s four daughters died in the helicopter crush.” While Bryant and one of his daughters, Gianna, were killed in a helicopter crash on Jan. 26, 2020, his three other daughters were not on board, contrary to the claim made in The Weekly Observer’s article and headline.

-  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.](#)

The Weekly Observer has a history of prematurely reporting the deaths of celebrities who have been hospitalized. On June 23, 2018, the site reported the death of Joe Jackson, the father of famed singer Michael Jackson. Jackson had been hospitalized with late-stage pancreatic cancer, and died four days later. However, the Weekly Observer did not correct its story, which was quickly debunked by the fact-checking organization Snopes. In November 2017, the site misreported the death of serial killer Charles Manson, four days prior to his actual death.

The website published another false claim in 2020 related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In March 2020, an article used a fabricated quote in its headline, “Bill Gates: ‘Microchips will be used to fight the Covid 19.’” The article then falsely claimed, “Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates will launch an implantable capsule with ‘digital certificates’ to show who has been tested for the coronavirus and vaccinated against it.”

The article distorted one of Gates’ quotes from an “Ask Me Anything” session about the pandemic that aired in March 2020 on Reddit.

In response to a question about how businesses should operate during the pandemic, Gates said, “Eventually we will have some digital certificates to show who has recently recovered or been tested recently.” However, Gates never said at the Reddit chat that he was launching “an implantable capsule” to track coronavirus tests. The Gates Foundation told FactCheck.org that Gates’ reference to “digital certificates,” was referring to a technology used to transmit encrypted information online about COVID-19 testing, but did not involve an implantable microchip.

The website’s writers often do not attribute sources for their information, making the stories difficult to verify or disprove. For example, a July 2018 article about a shooting headlined “New Orleans suspects have been arrested,” does not provide information about where the purported shooting occurred or the names of any “suspects.”

Other articles frequently carry unsubstantiated or exaggerated headlines. A November 2018 story headlined “New exoplanet has been discovered. NASA is hiding evidence of extraterrestrial life,” offers no evidence to support its claim that NASA has hidden evidence of alien life.

Because the site has published articles and headlines with false information, including using fabricated quotes, 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 website does not post a policy on correcting errors. Because NewsGuard could not find any corrections and the site has failed to correct numerous false stories, the site does not meet the standard for regularly correcting errors.

The site generally does not publish opinion content.

When NewsGuard contacted Olgi Zenullari, CEO of the website’s hosting provider, XWord Media LLC, asking about the TheWeeklyObserver.com’s promotion of false claims about the COVID-19 virus, he suspended the website’s hosting account, taking it offline.

“This is totally unacceptable behavior especially during these pandemic times, so profiting out of it is simply bad,” Zenullari said in an email.

Asked about the site’s editorial practices, the site’s owner, Anastasios Magas, told NewsGuard in an email that he did not have oversight over the content, although he was told by contributors that they would be publishing “fake news.”

“I had other plans when I purchased the site, however due to personal reasons, I couldn’t manage it,” Magas said. “I hired some students to write the content, but things went south when I did not have enough money to pay them, so they said they were going to create fake news until they got paid for their work.”

He added that he agreed with the hosting provider’s decision to suspend the site. “I think it’s better if the site remains suspended for all, as I don’t like those articles

either,” he said.

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#### Transparency

TheWeeklyObserver.com does not disclose Anastasios Magas is its owner and does not identify any editorial leaders. Some articles identify authors, but no articles also provide contact or biographical information. Some articles were credited only to pseudonyms, such as “taso.”

Magas did not answer questions about the site’s lack of information on ownership, content creators, and editors in his response to NewsGuard.

Advertisements had been distinguishable from editorial content.

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#### History

TheWeeklyObserver.com’s domain was registered in 2015.

*Editor’s Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on May 4, 2020, to add examples of the site’s COVID-19 content. All of the website’s content was removed by its hosting provider in April 2020 after NewsGuard contacted the provider with questions.*

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

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## Sources

#### Ownership and Financing

<http://theweeklyobserver.com/privacy-policy/>  
<http://theweeklyobserver.com/contacts-2/>  
<https://domainbigdata.com/theweeklyobserver.com>  
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Content

<http://theweeklyobserver.com/about-us/>  
<http://theweeklyobserver.com/news/auto-moto/>

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Credibility

Osbourne coronavirus: <http://archive.is/EkdjM>  
Kobe Bryant story: <http://archive.is/4yZRQ>  
<https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2020/jan/27/blog-posting/Viral-post-falsely-claims-Kobe-died-all-daughters/>  
Gates story: <http://archive.is/cfiSu>  
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<http://theweeklyobserver.com/new-jersey-tragedy-16-year-old-shot-killed-four-people/30705/>

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Transparency

<http://theweeklyobserver.com/about-us/>  
<https://theweeklyobserver.com/author/chris/>

<http://theweeklyobserver.com/author/terry/>  
<https://theweeklyobserver.com/author/taso/>  
<https://theweeklyobserver.com/author/chris-blagden/>

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History

<https://domainbigdata.com/theweeklyobserver.com>  
<https://www.easycounter.com/report/theweeklyobserver.com>  
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