

collective-evolution.com

A website that has promoted numerous debunked conspiracy theories, including claims that the 9/11 terrorist attacks were staged and that vaccines can cause autism.



Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic journalistic standards.

Score: 12.5/100

Ownership and Financing

Collective Evolution is owned by site founder Joe Martino through Collective Evolution Media LTD, a company based in Pickering, Ontario.

Collective-Evolution.com carries advertisements and accepts donations from readers. The site's Make a Donation page states, "Collective Evolution does not have sponsors or corporate funding. Everything we do from our website to our documentaries is done with money from our supporters or our pockets."

Content

Collective Evolution's About Us page describes itself as a "conscious media and education company dedicated to shifting collective consciousness."

Much of the site's content is focused on conspiracy theories, such as alleged government cover-ups and reported encounters with alien life and UFOs. Articles in this vein have run under headlines such as "Do UFOs Represent Some Sort of Threat? Or Is This Just Government Propaganda?" and "The Event' – What's Really Happening & What You Need To Know About It."

Articles also cover alternative medicine and herbal remedies in the site's Health section, with headlines such as "Black Seed: The Ultimate Mediterranean Powerhouse" and "10 Things You May Think Are Healthy, But Probably Aren't."

The site also offers a podcast hosted by founder Joe Martino, and links to the Collective Evolution YouTube channel.

Credibility

Collective Evolution articles have frequently included false information related to vaccines, including the debunked link between vaccinations and the development of autism.

-  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.](#)

For example, a March 2020 article, titled “CDC Admits In Federal Court They Have No Evidence ‘Vaccines Don’t Cause Autism,’” falsely claimed that, “As of March 2nd, 2020, the CDC has admitted in federal court documents that they do not have any evidence to support the claim that vaccines given to babies up to 6 months don’t cause autism.”

This claim was based on misrepresenting the result of a lawsuit filed against the CDC by the anti-vaccine group Informed Consent Action Network (ICAN). The group sued the CDC for copies of studies that the agency relies upon for claiming that various vaccines given within the first six months of life, including the diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (DTaP) and polio vaccines, do not cause autism. The CDC, contrary to the Collective-Evolution.com article’s claim, responded with 20 peer-reviewed studies demonstrating that there is no link between vaccines and autism. As reported in a March 2020 article from HealthFeedback.org, one of the included studies, published in the Journal of Pediatrics in August 2013, found no association between the risk of developing autism and the vaccines given between birth and seven months, covering the vaccination period singled out in ICAN’s lawsuit.

Despite the evidence provided by the CDC, the Collective Evolution article falsely claimed that, “Ultimately, the CDC was asked to provide studies to prove that vaccines given with the first six months of life do not cause autism. They could not provide any, not one.”

An April 2018 article credited to the anti-vaccine group Children’s Health Defense, titled “Here We Go Again: More Vaccine-Autism Denialism,” claimed that there are “over 80 independent studies that connect the dots between the vaccine preservative thimerosal and autism.”

In fact, none of the studies discussed in the article established a causal relationship between vaccinations and 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, based on an abundance of scientific evidence.

Articles on Collective-Evolution.com have also falsely claimed that “aborted human fetal tissue” is an ingredient in vaccines. For example, a March 2018 article titled “10 Common Ingredients You Didn’t Know About That Are Found In Most Vaccines,” listed “aborted human fetal tissue debris” as one of the “questionable components” in vaccines.

Some vaccines, such as those protecting against rubella and chicken pox, are in fact produced using cell lines descended from two fetuses aborted in the 1960s, according to a January 2017 article in Science magazine. However, no additional fetal cells are required for vaccine production, and no actual fetal tissue is present in these vaccines.

The National Catholic Bioethics Center, which consults with the Vatican and Catholics on medical ethics issues and opposes abortion, has stated that “one cannot accurately say that the vaccines contain any of the cells from the original abortion.”

In early 2020, Collective-Evolution.com promoted a false health claim related to the COVID-19 virus.

An April 2020 article headlined, “New Study: The Flu Vaccine Is ‘Significantly Associated’ With An Increased Risk of Coronavirus,” claimed that “A new study published in the journal Vaccine found a significantly greater risk of contracting coronavirus among individuals in the study who received the influenza vaccine.” According to the article, “With regards to the coronavirus and human metapneumovirus, the data in this study showed an increased risk of contraction within vaccinated individuals to be 36 percent greater.”

These claims misrepresented the study, which was published in the journal Vaccine in January 2020. The study examined rates of respiratory illness among U.S.

military personnel, based on whether they received a flu vaccine during the 2017-18 flu season. The COVID-19 virus did not emerge until late 2019.

Fact-checking articles published in 2020 by USA Today, HealthFeedback.org, and LeadStories.com said there is no evidence that the flu vaccine either protects against the COVID-19 virus or that it increases the risk of infection.

A January 2019 article, titled “Watch: 9/11 Survivors & Firefighters Explain How Bombs Were Going Off In The Buildings,” promoted false claims about the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

“There is more than enough evidence to prove that foul play occurred on 9/11, and much of it comes from US intelligence agencies,” the article stated. “For example, General Albert Stubblebine, who is credited with redesigning the U.S. Army intelligence architecture during his time as commanding general of the U.S. Army Intelligence & Security Command, has been very outspoken about 9/11, claiming that a plane did not actually hit the Pentagon. We also have peer-reviewed studies published in physics and engineering journals concluding that all three towers were brought down by a controlled demolition.”

Because the site has regularly promoted false information and conspiracy theories in its articles and headlines, NewsGuard has determined it repeatedly publishes false content, fails to gather and present information responsibly, and does not avoid deceptive headlines.

Collective-Evolution.com’s Editorial Policies page describes the site’s approach to corrections. “If we discover a correction needs to be made, it is always clearly labelled within an article,” the site said.

“Sometimes we slightly update a headline or adjust something we may have made a mistake with. It’s rare, but where you see it is where we have been notified or have found errors.”

However, because NewsGuard could not find any corrections on the site and numerous articles with false claims have gone uncorrected, the site does not meet the standard for regularly correcting errors.

The site labels some articles as opinion, but others tagged as news regularly include opinionated statements to advance the site's conspiratorial agenda.

Another April 2020 article, also labeled as Alternative News, advocated for New York legislation to study the health impact of 5G cell phone technology. "Read the bill here and encourage your state representatives to establish a commission to study the health and environmental effects of 5G today!," the article stated. "All you have to do is send them this sample bill!"

Because Collective-Evolution.com labels opinionated articles as news, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

Site owner Joe Martino declined to answer NewsGuard's questions on the site's editorial practices, stating in a March 2019 email: "You can expect your organization will be held accountable for its judgment of our content that doesn't match mainstream conjecture. There is a difference between false stories and good journalism, I feel you are missing this nuance deeply...."

Martino did not respond to two additional emails sent by NewsGuard in April 2020.

Transparency

Collective-Evolution.com's About Us page names Martino as the site's founder, but not as its owner. Although an earlier version of the site's About Us page identified Collective Evolution Media LTD as the "legal entity," behind the site, this disclosure was removed sometime between March 29 and April 3, 2020, according to archived versions of the website. Because the website does not identify Collective Evolution Media LTD as its owner, and only names Martino as its founder, it does not meet NewsGuard's standard for disclosing ownership.

The site does not identify who is in charge of content.

Articles are generally credited to the writer, with bylines linking to a page with the author's biography, along with links to their email address or Twitter accounts.

The Contact page includes a web form for "general inquiries, story ideas, more information about CE" and to book Martino for a speaking engagement.

Advertisements are distinguishable from editorial content.

Martino declined to comment on the site's lack of information on editorial leaders in an exchange of emails with NewsGuard in March 2019. He did not respond to two additional emails sent by NewsGuard in April 2020, again seeking comment on the site's lack of information about editorial leaders, as well as asking why its ownership disclosure had been removed from the About Us page.

History

The site was founded by Martino in 2009.

Editor's Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on April 22, 2020, with new examples of the site's content and to reflect that Collective-Evolution.com no longer meets NewsGuard's standard for disclosing ownership. The criteria checklist has been adjusted accordingly.

Written by: [John Gregory](#)

Edited by: [Kendrick McDonald](#), [Eric Effron](#)

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

Sources

Ownership and
Financing

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Transparency

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