A self-described “alternative news” website that often publishes conspiracy theories about 9/11 and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ownership and Financing

The site is owned by Ruggero Arenella, according to a Privacy Policy page that can be found only via an internet search. The information is not directly accessible from the site.

The site does not run advertising or sell subscriptions. Revenue is generated by an annual fundraiser, according to a January 2020 post on ComeDonChisciotte.org (which means “Like Don Quixote”) by Davide Ranzini, a former editor of the site.

Content

ComeDonChisciotte.org describes itself as an information site dedicated to covering ideas that are not covered by the mainstream media. “It’s not important to be up to date on the latest news, as much as searching for overlooked news and hidden logics within facts,” the site states on its About page. (“Non è tanto importante essere aggiornati con gli ultimi avvenimenti, quanto cercare le notizie trascurate e le logiche interne ai fatti.”) The site states on its Facebook page that it “has fought fake news for over 20 years. Free and independent, we continue our battle against the windmills.” (“ComeDonChisciotte combatte le fake news da oltre 20 anni. Liberi e indipendenti, continuiamo la nostra battaglia contro i mulini a vento.”)

Content on ComeDonChisciotte.org includes some original articles, articles republished from other Italian sites and blogs, and articles translated and republished from other self-described “alternative news” sites from around the world. Content is divided in sections including Current Affairs, Politics, Medicine, Economics, Europe, Science, and Opinion.

Typical headlines have included “Covid-19 positive, maybe negative, maybe who knows” (“Covid-19 positivo, anzi negativo, anzi chi lo sa?”); “More of (our) money to Gavi Alliance” (“Altri soldi (nostri) a Gavi Alliance”); and “The mask revolution” (“La rivoluzione delle mascherine”).

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

Score: 7.5/100

- Does not repeatedly publish false content (22 points)
- 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)

Criteria are listed in order of importance.

More information.
The site also has a YouTube channel, which broadcasts an original newscast called ComeDonChisciotte TG several times a week.

**Credibility**

The site mainly republishes or translates material from other blogs and websites, including from sites that NewsGuard has found to be unreliable, including InfoWars.com, NaturalNews.com, and GlobalResearch.ca.

The site has published multiple articles containing false or misleading claims about COVID-19.

For example, a May 2020 article headlined “A team of Australian scientists discovers that COVID-19 was created in a lab” (“Un team di scienziati australiani scopre che COVID-19 è stato creato in un laboratorio”) — a translation of an article that first appeared on LifeSiteNews.com — stated that new researches proves that there was human intervention in the creation of the virus. According to the article, “The lead researcher on the study claims that the results represent “a noteworthy coincidence or a clear sign that there’s been human intervention” (“Il ricercatore capo del team afferma che i risultati rappresentano ‘una notevole coincidenza o un chiaro segno di intervento umano’ nella creazione del virus.”)

The article also claimed that “Unless an animal version of the virus is found, this evidence shows there’s been ‘human intervention.’” (“A meno che non venga trovata una versione animale del virus, l'evidenza indica l'intervento umano.”)

There is no evidence that the virus that causes COVID-19 was made or manipulated in a lab. A study published in Nature in February 2020 showed that the new coronavirus genome is “96% identical to the bat coronavirus.” A study published in the journal Nature Medicine in March 2020 concluded that the virus “was not a laboratory creation and not a purposefully manipulated virus.” In an April 2020 statement, the U.S. intelligence community said it “concurs with the wide scientific consensus that the COVID-19 virus was not manmade or genetically modified.”

In March 2020, ComeDonChisciotte.org published an article that first appeared in NaturalNews.com stating that Vitamin C can cure coronavirus. The article, headlined “Vitamin C used by a team of Chinese
doctors to treat Coronavirus infection” (“Vitamina C usata da un team di medici cinesi per curare l’infezione da Coronavirus”), stated that “Some researchers from China say they have cured coronavirus patients with doses of vitamin C” (“Alcuni ricercatori riferiscono dalla Cina di aver curato pazienti affetti da Coronavirus con dosi di vitamina C.”) The article also stated that “The doctors have explained that the tempestive use of vitamin C could have a strong antioxidant effect on the virus, potentially reducing the inflammatory response and better the function of the endothelium” (“I medici hanno spiegato che l’uso tempestivo della vitamina C potrebbe avere un forte effetto antiossidante sul virus, riducendo potenzialmente le risposta infiammatorie e migliorando la funzione dell’endotelio”).

Although it is true that there is a clinical study underway in China to assess whether a vitamin C-heavy regime can help fight COVID-19, it is not true that it is a scientifically proven cure. Taking vitamin C is not an effective remedy for the COVID-19 virus, according to the World Health Organization. The WHO and the CDC have said that there is no specific treatment recommended for treating the coronavirus strain responsible for the 2020 outbreak.

The site has also frequently posted false or misleading claims regarding the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the U.S., supporting the conspiracy theory movement “9/11 truthers” and claiming that what officials have said about 9/11 is fabricated and that the attack could have been an “inside job.”

For example, a September 2019 article, which first appeared in English on PaulCraigRoberts.org and Headlined “The official version of the collapse of WTC N.7 is a pile of rubble” (“La versione ufficiale del crollo del WTC N. 7 è un cumulo di macerie”), claimed that the collapse of World Trade Centre 7 was “the result of a controlled demolition.”

Many other articles published on the site over the years have promoted the idea that the attacks were “fabricated.”

Several federal investigations, including a 2008 study by the U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology, concluded that the Twin Towers collapsed after hijacked jets were flown into the two towers, sparking fires that weakened the buildings’ structure.
NIST found that a third tower, 7 World Trade Center, collapsed after debris from the Trade Center’s north tower damaged it.

Because ComeDonChisciotte.org has often published false and misleading content, NewsGuard has determined that the site repeatedly publishes false information, does not gather and present information responsibly, and does not avoid deceptive headlines.

On its About page, the site states that it does not have a particular political leaning or agenda and it is open to publishing all points of view. “There are no predetermined political sides, on the contrary all ideas are taken into consideration as far as they are useful for understanding reality,” the site states. (“Non ci sono schieramenti politici precostituiti a priori, ma le idee vengono analizzate solo in quanto risultano utili a capire la realtà.”)

The site includes an Opinion section. However, opinionated content appears throughout the site, without labeling, including in the News and Current Affairs sections.

For example, in an original article published in June 2020, headlined “George Floyd or Martin Luther King?” and labeled “Civil War” and “United States” (Guerra Civile, Stati Uniti), the author stated: “The progressive ‘left’ is now starting a real civil war, radicalizing it with the support of ethnically marginalized minorities, especially black ones, sanctifying the black male who has become a hero by chance, and demonstrating all their hatred towards the strong, white, violent, hetero man, maybe even family father, hit by unemployment and economic downturn atop of economic decline” (“La ‘sinistra’ progressista sta ora scatenando una vera guerra civile, estremizzandola con l’appoggio alle minoranze etniche emarginate, soprattutto nere, santificando il maschio nero, diventato eroe per caso, e mostrando tutto il suo disprezzo per il bianco forte, violento, eterosessuale, magari però anche padre di famiglia, colpito dopo il Covid da ulteriore disoccupazione e malessere economico.”)

Another June 2020 article, headlined “The massive lockdown lie: truth and distortions” (“L’immensa truffa del lockdown. Verità e distorsioni”), also original to the site, stated that “Mainstream media has continued to criminalize all the virologists and doctors … who are
openly calling out against the panic and the absurd continuation of these restrictive measures.” (“I media mainstream stanno continuando a criminalizzare tutti i virologi e i medici come il prof. Clementi e Zangrillo che denunciano apertamente la loro contrarietà al panico e all’assurda continuazione delle misure restrittive”).

Because ComeDonChisciotte.org publishes unlabeled opinion content outside the Opinion section in news articles, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

The site does not articulate a corrections policy and the most recent correction NewsGuard found was published in 2009 — which does not meet NewsGuard’s standard for regularly publishing corrections.

NewsGuard contacted the site twice via its contact form, seeking comment on the site’s reporting standards, its approach to corrections, and its handling of opinion, but did not get a response. Other than the contact from, the site provides no other contact information, such as an email address or phone number.

Transparency

The site does not disclose its ownership or identify any editorial leaders.

The site often includes full names of content creators when the article is republished from other outlets. However the site uses first names or pseudonyms to identify the site’s own content creators. For example, one staff member is identified as “Truman Burbank” (a reference to the movie “Truman Show.”) In most cases, the site does not provide contact or biographical information for the content creators. Therefore, the site does not meet NewsGuard’s standard for providing information about content creators.

The website does not run advertising.

ComeDonChisciotte.org did not respond to two messages from NewsGuard seeking comment on its lack of disclosure regarding its ownership, editorial leadership, and content creators.

History

The domain ComeDonChisciotte.org was registered in 2005 by Davide Ranzini, an italian writer, according to
domain registration tracker Whols.com. An earlier version of the site, ComeDonChisciottte.net, started a few years earlier and was primarily focused on the 9/11 attacks.

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Send feedback to NewsGuard: Click Here

Sources

Ownership and Financing

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