TheVaccineReaction.org is owned by the National Vaccine Information Center, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit group based in Sterling, Virginia, which describes its mission as “preventing vaccine injuries and deaths through public education and advocating for informed consent protections in medical policies and public health laws.”

According to its most recent filing with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, the center reported $1 million in revenue in the fiscal year ending August 2018. All but $13,000 of that revenue came from contributions and gifts. NVIC says on its website that it “takes no pharmaceutical or government funding.”

The site does not run advertisements. The About Us page includes a link to a page accepting donations for the National Vaccine Information Center.

The Vaccine Reaction says under the website’s logo that it offers “an enlightened conversation about vaccination, health and autonomy.”

The website covers policy, safety, and research involving vaccines, along with personal stories of parents who claim their children had a serious reaction to a vaccine, such as “Harvard Lawyer’s Vaccine Injured Son.”

Sections on the site include Vaccination, Health, Ethics, Medicine, Law, Media, and Business. Each section includes several subsections, with titles such as Holistic Health, Informed Consent, and Editorial Bias.

The site also features an Opinion section with articles that often question vaccination policies, such as “Big Pharma Pulls the String in Maine?,” “Vaccines are Kind
The Vaccine Reaction has repeatedly promoted false claims about vaccines. In June 2020, an article headlined “Will Newborns Be Separated from Parents for COVID-19 Testing?,” made false claims about vaccines in development for COVID-19. The article, which was first published on the website Mercola.com, summarized comments by Barbara Loe Fisher, founder and executive editor of TheVaccineReaction.org and president of the National Vaccine Information Center, about the development of messenger ribonucleic acid (mRNA) vaccines as a possible vaccine for COVID-19.

“As noted by Fisher, the mRNA vaccines being developed against COVID-19 will alter your RNA and DNA, which is of tremendous concern,” the article stated. “As mentioned, the idea behind them is to turn your body into an antigen-manufacturing plant, and if your immune system is hypersensitive, it could overreact, causing severe problems. Considering how many people have autoimmune diseases and allergies, these vaccines could have devastating effects for many.”

It is true that RNA vaccines do work differently than typical vaccines. According to a 2015 article from Harvard Medical School, instead of the traditional approach of using small or inactivated doses of an antigen to produce an immune system response, a mRNA vaccine includes a specific mRNA sequence so the body would produce the antigen itself and develop antibodies to fight future infections.

While no mRNA vaccine has ever been licensed for human use, there is no evidence backing Fisher’s claims that such a vaccine could “alter your RNA and DNA.” A March 2019 review of existing scientific evidence on mRNA vaccines, published in the journal Frontiers in Immunology, found that the mRNA “cannot potentially integrate into the host genome and will be degraded naturally” after the body produces the antigen.
Because the mRNA vaccine would become quickly degraded, it could not cause an autoimmune reaction, as Fisher suggested, according to medical experts interviewed in a June 2020 article by health fact-checking website HealthFeedback.org.

“The principle of autoimmunity is that our body recognizes and destroys our own components,” Angeline Rouers, research fellow at the Singapore Immunology Network, told HealthFeedback.org. “However, in the case of the RNA vaccine, the protein made by our body is something unrelated with our own proteins, so there is no chance of an autoimmune reaction but a reaction against something unknown to teach our body to fight against it. This illustrates the very principle of vaccination.”

Marco Cáceres, managing editor of TheVaccineReaction.org, defended Fisher’s claims in a July 2020 email to NewsGuard. “Ms. Fisher does not make false statements,” he said. “Ms. Fisher has a transparent 38-year public record of carefully researching and anchoring statements she makes about infectious diseases and vaccines with references from the peer reviewed scientific literature, government health agencies, medical institutions, mainstream media publications and other professional publication resources. Ms. Fisher stands by her referenced statements and perspective voicing concern about potential risks associated with experimental COVID-19 vaccines being fast tracked to market.”

A June 2020 video on the site, titled “How Fear of a Virus Changed Our World,” made misleading claims about the development process for COVID-19 vaccines. In the video, Fisher, founder and executive editor of TheVaccineReaction.org and president of the National Vaccine Information Center, claimed that “some companies are cutting corners by conducting Phase 1, 2 and 3 trials simultaneously” in the “race to develop a COVID-19 vaccine.”

“While we are being ordered to obey new rules that require us to give up our constitutional rights, drug companies and health officials are violating old rules
that govern ethics and the scientific method for proving that vaccines are safe and effective,” Fisher said.

Fisher’s source for this claim was provided in a written version of her commentary on NVIC.org. The footnote linked to a June 2020 CNBC article, which quoted Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, as saying, “what we’re doing is something that’s called developing ‘at risk,’” which means that “at the same time you’re finishing your Phase 1 trial, you’re preparing your Phase 3 trial sites.”

However, the CNBC article did not claim, as the NVIC.org article did, that drug companies were conducting Phase 1, 2, and 3 trials simultaneously. In a June 2020 interview with ProPublica, an FDA spokesperson said, “We recognize that there are some that are concerned that ‘rapid development’ means that vaccine development steps are being skipped, but the FDA scientists will not cut corners in order to approve a vaccine.”

Cáceres told NewsGuard in an email, “Ms. Fisher did not misrepresent the fact that pharmaceutical companies are being allowed to conduct phase 1, 2, and 3 trials sometimes simultaneously in a race to be the first company to get a COVID-19 vaccine licensed.”

In a July 2019 article, The Vaccine Reaction quoted Chris Exley, a Keele University professor who has expressed the scientifically unsupported belief that aluminum adjuvants — which are substances added to vaccines to help accelerate the immune system’s response in producing antibodies — can cause autism. The article, headlined “Chris Exley, PhD on the Link Between Aluminum in Vaccines and Autism,” said that aluminum adjuvants “could produce a more severe and disabling form of autism.”

According to The Sunday Times in London, Exley’s study has been criticized for not having a control group to evaluate results, and for receiving funding from an anti-vaccine group, the Children’s Medical Safety Research Institute.
The U.K. National Health Service states on its website that “the amount of aluminium used in killed vaccines is very, very small. No harmful effects have been seen with vaccines that contain an aluminium-based adjuvant.” NHS, along with many other health and science authorities, including the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization, have repeatedly stated that there is no link between vaccines and autism, based on an abundance of scientific evidence.

In a November 2019 email to NewsGuard, Fisher defended Exley’s research and the website’s publication of his claims.

“In publicly reporting his findings, Dr. Exley is exercising his professional responsibility and human right to freedom of speech as a scientist to publish and discuss his research on the biological mechanisms for aluminum toxicity and adverse effects of aluminum exposures on the environment and human health,” Fisher said.

Asked about the evidence showing that vaccines are not linked to autism, Fisher argued that “the vaccine science is not settled.”

“Federal government agencies, including the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Centers for Disease Control (CDC), which develop, regulate, and promote vaccines and advocate for mandatory vaccination laws, as well as the World Health Organization, which funds the development and promotion of vaccines and mandatory vaccination laws, are not infallible,” Fisher wrote. “Those government agencies and institutions and the information and policies they publish and promote should not be exempt from examination and public criticism by non-governmental organizations and media outlets, including The Vaccine Reaction, just like pharmaceutical companies should not be above criticism or immune from liability for the safety of their products.”
In a January 2019 article titled “WHO, Pharma, Gates & Government: Who’s Calling the Shots?,” the website tied vaccinations to a variety of health issues, saying doctors “cannot explain why so many highly vaccinated children in the U.S. are sicker, not healthier today: 1 child in 6 learning disabled and 1 in 40 with autism and millions more suffering with asthma, diabetes, severe allergies, epilepsy, cancer, schizophrenia, depression and other chronic disease marked by chronic inflammation in the body.”

No reliable evidence has found that children in the U.S. are “sicker” following vaccinations, nor did the article cite any study backing that claim. The article also did not cite evidence for the claim that vaccines increase the chances of conditions such as autism, asthma, or cancer.

Fisher defended the article’s claims as “accurate observations.”

“The article ‘WHO, Pharma, Gates & Government: Who’s Calling the Shots?’ provides well referenced information and perspective about why ‘no exceptions’ vaccine policies and laws are being implemented even though there are outstanding scientific knowledge gaps about vaccine adverse effects and who is at greatest risk for suffering harm,” Fisher said. “The article forwards NVIC’s 37-year mission to prevent vaccine injuries and deaths through public education and forwards The Vaccine Reaction journal newspaper’s guiding vision to encourage ‘an enlightened conversation about vaccination, health and autonomy.’”

A November 2018 article titled “Vaccine Boom, Population Bust,” written by guest contributor Celeste McGovern, promoted the debunked claim that the vaccine for human papillomavirus (HPV) is linked to lower birth rates. The article based its claim on a June 2018 study published in the Journal of Toxicology and Environmental Health that associated the HPV vaccine with infertility, after comparing pregnancy rates among women aged 25 to 29 who received the vaccine and those who did not. The article claimed the study “suggests that if all the females in this study had
received the HPV vaccine, the number of women having ever conceived would have fallen by two million.”

However, the study, written by Baruch College economics and finance professor Gayle DeLong, did not take into account whether the women cited in the study used contraception or had tried to become pregnant. The study was retracted in December 2019.

According to the CDC’s website, “there are no data that suggest getting the HPV vaccine will have an effect on future fertility for women.” In an August 2018 study published in the journal Pediatrics, involving more than 58,000 girls aged 13 to 17 who received the HPV vaccine, researchers identified only one case of premature menopause that followed vaccination.

Fisher defended TheVaccineReaction.org’s article. “Both DeLong and McGovern emphasized that there should be more research into the possible impact of HPV vaccination on fertility,” she said in an email. “We do not understand why you are criticizing TVR's reprinting of McGovern’s thoroughly referenced article discussing DeLong’s thoroughly referenced study.”

Articles on TheVaccineReaction.org often misrepresent research to advance anti-vaccine views. For example, an October 2019 article titled “Flu Shot Fails to Protect Seniors and May Increase Miscarriages,” claimed that the flu vaccine is “linked to an eightfold risk of miscarriage.”

A study published in the journal Vaccine in September 2017 did find that some pregnant women who received the flu vaccine two years in a row had an increased risk of miscarriage. However, the researchers also said, “this study does not and cannot establish a causal relationship,” a conclusion which was not mentioned in The Vaccine Reaction article.

The same team of researchers, from Wisconsin's Marshfield Clinic and the Kaiser Permanente health system in California and Colorado, published a larger study in October 2019, which covered three flu seasons and expanded the women surveyed from 485 to 1,236.
That study found no association between the flu vaccine and miscarriage, stating, “These findings lend support to current recommendations for influenza vaccination at any time during pregnancy, including the first trimester.”

While The Vaccine Reaction article mentions this later study, it omitted the fact that it involved more than twice the number of participants, and said, “far more research needs to be done before a claim of safety can be made for women receiving influenza vaccine during pregnancy.”

The article on TheVaccineReaction.org was attributed to guest writer Joseph Mercola, an osteopathic physician whose website, Mercola.com, was found by NewsGuard to have repeatedly published false medical information. Fisher said her site “does not censor or edit content of guest writers” and defended the article.

“Dr. Mercola presents contrasting evidence and opinion on this subject and he clearly states that, after weighing current evidence for and against an association between influenza vaccination during pregnancy and miscarriage, it is his perspective that, ‘the issue is still wide open for discussion and contemplation’ and that ‘far more research needs to be done.’”

Because TheVaccineReaction.org has repeatedly promoted false and unsubstantiated health claims in articles and headlines, and misrepresented research to promote anti-vaccine views, NewsGuard has determined that the website repeatedly publishes false content, fails to gather and present information responsibly, and does not avoid deceptive headlines.

The Vaccine Reaction lists a corrections policy on its About Us page, stating that “a correction to a referenced article published in TVR will be made and noted in the article’s Comment Section or at the end of an article if an article contains an error that affects the accuracy or clarity of the article’s content.”

NewsGuard found one correction that was mentioned in the comments section in a February 2019 article, in which the site’s managing editor responded “I’ve made
the correction” in response to a reader’s question. The original error was not described. Asked for other examples of corrections, Fisher directed NewsGuard to a November 2019 article where a broken link was fixed, although that article also did not explain what had been changed.

“If no corrections have been made to an article since February 2019, then it is simply because no errors of fact have been brought to our attention by readers that require corrections to be made,” Fisher said in a November 2019 email. Managing editor Marco Cáceres did not provide any additional examples of corrections in a July 2020 email.

Because the website does not make transparent corrections that explain the original error, and because TheVaccineReaction.org has not issued corrections to false content about vaccines, NewsGuard has determined that the website does not meet its standard for regularly correcting errors.

TheVaccineReaction.org’s About Us page does not clearly disclose the site’s vaccine skeptic perspective, describing the site as “a forum for readers to engage in critical thinking and participate in an enlightened conversation about reaction to one of the most important public conversations of our time: the relationship between vaccination, health and autonomy.”

Articles published outside the site’s Opinion section also include opinion. For example, a March 2020 article, headlined “Amish Children to Be Denied Education in New York, posted in the site’s Ethics section, criticized a ruling on a New York lawsuit filed by an Amish family against the state’s removal of religious exemptions for school vaccine requirements. “The court decisions in New York make it clear that the assault on our constitutional rights and civil liberties will not be remedied in a courtroom,” the article said. “The sheer number of lawsuits filed by families of children denied an education and the financial toll taken by New York as it repeatedly defends a law that unjustly targets and penalizes a small segment of the population should caution other states considering similar legislation.”
A May 2019 article published in the site’s Law section, headlined “State Bills Propose Full Disclosure of Vaccine Side Effects,” advocated for the legislation discussed in the story. “Informed consent to medical risk taking is a human right and parents should always be allowed to exercise the right of informed consent to vaccination on behalf of their minor children,” the author wrote.

A September 2019 article also posted in the site’s Ethics section, titled “What’s Wrong With ‘Religious Exemption’?,” criticized state laws that removed or limited exemptions from vaccine requirements. “We simply cannot tolerate such egregious violations of individual citizens’ rights,” the article said. “There’s too much at stake. Bodily autonomy is sacrosanct. An individual’s right to medical choice is inviolable. This is the U.S.A., land of the free! Not only may we not force-vaccinate anyone, neither may we ostracize them for not being vaccinated. That’s Jim Crow laws revisited.”

The article was updated with an opinion label in July 2020 after NewsGuard inquired about it in an email.

“We have been going through our archives to identify and correct any mis-categorized articles published in the past,” Cáceres told NewsGuard. “Thank you for pointing out that this article by a guest writer should have been labeled as opinion, which we failed to catch during our review process.”

Because the site does not clearly disclose its anti-vaccine perspective, and includes opinion in stories outside its labeled opinion section, NewsGuard has determined that TheVaccineReaction.org fails to handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

Transparency

The site’s About Us page states that it is “published by the National Vaccine Information Center,” although it does not specifically say that the center is its owner.

TheVaccineReaction.org links to the center’s separate website, NVIC.org, which lists some financial supporters on its homepage under the heading Our Partners. Fisher confirmed in a November 2019 email to NewsGuard that the organizations listed there, which
include Mercola.com, have donated to the center. The About Us page also says that TheVaccineReaction.org is “hosted by Mercola.com.” However, NewsGuard does not consider “partners” or “hosted by” to be a clear disclosure of financial support, and thus has determined that TheVaccineReaction.org does not meet NewsGuard’s standard for disclosing major donors for the nonprofit corporation that owns it.

Asked about the lack of disclosure, Fisher challenged NewsGuard’s ownership standards. “We do not understand why NewsGuard is asking a small charity like NVIC to publicly disclose information about our donors that not only is not required by federal law, but is protected from public disclosure by federal law,” Fisher said.

The About Us page identifies the site’s editorial leadership and staff writers, and provides their biographical information, but no individual contact information. Articles are generally credited to their authors.

The site does not run advertisements.

The Vaccine Reaction was founded in 1995 as a newsletter that was mailed to supporters of the National Vaccine Information Center. TheVaccineReaction.org launched in 2013.

**Editor’s Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on July 9, 2020, with additional examples of the site’s content, and comments from the website’s editor.**

Written by: John Gregory
Contributing: Lillian Childress
Edited by: Amy Westfeldt

Send feedback to NewsGuard: Click Here

Sources

Ownership and Financing

Vaccine don’t cause asthma:
https://www.chop.edu_centers-programs/vaccine-education-center/vaccines-and-other-conditions/vaccines-asthma-allergies
MMR vaccine caused measles #1:
http://archive.is/yUIEP
MMR vaccine caused measles #2:
http://archive.is/ZAH4S
New Hampshire case: https://www.nhpr.org/post/dhhs-nh-child-didnt-have-measles-just-vaccine-reaction#stream/0
Michigan cases:
ISDA on measles vaccine:
Flu shot/miscarriage story:
http://archive.is/wiTma
First study:
2019 study:
CDC on flu shots/miscarriage:
HPV vaccine story: http://archive.is/e3cDR
DeLong study:
https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/parents/questions-answers.html
Pediatrics study on HPV:
https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/142/3/e20180943/supplemental
sso=1&sso_redirect_count=1&nfstatus=401&nftoken=0
Example of correction:
https://thevaccinereaction.org/2019/02/quest-for-alzheimers-vaccine-hitting-roadblocks/

News/opinion example #1:

News/opinion example #2:

News/opinion example #3:

Old news/opinion example #1:
https://thevaccinereaction.org/2019/07/google-shuts-down-traffic-to-health-advocate-mercola-com/

Old news/opinion example #2:
https://thevaccinereaction.org/2019/05/state-bills-propose-full-disclosure-of-vaccine-side-effects/

November 2019 article provided as correction example:

Transparency:
https://thevaccinereaction.org/about-us/
https://www.nvic.org/about/annual-reports.aspx
https://www.nvic.org/about.aspx

History:
https://whois.icann.org/en/lookup?
name=thevaccinereaction.org