

newsmax.com

A conservative site that covers politics, culture, and health, and airs videos from its cable TV network. Newsmax has published false and unsubstantiated health claims, including about vaccines and COVID-19.



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

Score: 35/100

Ownership and Financing

The site is owned by Newsmax Media Inc., a Florida-based company founded by Christopher Ruddy, who is the company's CEO and president, Newsmax's editor-in-chief. Ruddy has described himself as a close friend of U.S. President Donald Trump and frequently offers commentary on the Trump administration for other news organizations.

Ruddy holds a 60 percent ownership stake in Newsmax Media. Conservative billionaire and publisher Richard Mellon Scaife held a 40 percent share until his death in 2014. His stake then passed to 535 Media LLC, an affiliate of Scaife's company Trib Total Media, which publishes the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review newspaper.

The site runs advertisements, charges for premium content, and links to an online store.

In a 2014 interview with Bloomberg Business, Ruddy said that Newsmax generated the bulk of its revenue through newsletters. According to filings with the U.S. Federal Elections Commission, Newsmax received more than \$2.4 million between 2011 and 2020 from mostly conservative political action committees for services, including online advertising and email list acquisitions.

Donald J. Trump for President spent \$201,073.49 on Newsmax email lists during the 2016 election, according to FEC filings.

-  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.](#)

Content

Newsmax posts a tagline saying "Independent. American." below its logo. The website covers national and international politics, technology, health, and finance. Sections are divided into categories including Newsmax, TV, Health, Finance, and World.

Typical articles have run under headlines such as “Trump Administration Protecting Faith-Based Adoption, Foster Care Agencies,” “Koch Network Won’t Support Trump in 2020,” and “Satellite Surveillance Not Just for Global Superpowers Now.”

Newsmax also publishes a monthly print magazine and has a cable television network, with programming that is available on the site. The website airs episodes from Newsmax TV shows including “Spicer & Co.,” hosted by former Trump administration press secretary Sean Spicer, and “Greg Kelly Reports.”

Ruddy told Bloomberg Business that, compared with Fox News, Newsmax TV is intended to be “more information-based rather than being vituperative and polarizing.”

The site publishes primarily conservative columns in its Opinion section. Typical Newsmax columns include an argument by British-Canadian former publisher Conrad Black that the 2020 Democratic National Convention showed a party that is “Hijacked by Extremists, Lies.”; a column by former congressman and Republican presidential candidate Ron Paul about the politics of the COVID-19 pandemic; and a column by lawyer Alan Dershowitz that praised a peace agreement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates.

Newsmax.com supplements content produced by staff with articles by The Associated Press, Bloomberg News, and Reuters.

Credibility

Newsmax TV videos often cite firsthand interviews with politicians, and articles often summarize reports from credible news organizations such as Politico, the Washington Post, and local newspapers.

However, the website’s health coverage has advanced false claims, including misinformation about the safety of vaccines.

For example, a July 2020 article titled, “Tips for Avoiding Toxic Substances,” said, “Vaccines still contain some mercury, and most have toxic levels of aluminum.

For those reasons, they should be avoided whenever possible.”

Vaccine ingredients have included a mercury-based preservative called thimerosal. However, the preservative contains a type of mercury compound called ethylmercury, which is different from the separate compound methylmercury, which is found in certain kinds of fish and can be toxic at high levels. As the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention explains, ethylmercury from thimerosal is “cleared from the human body more quickly than methylmercury, and is therefore less likely to cause any harm.”

The CDC and the World Health Organization have repeatedly stated there is no evidence to suggest that the thimerosal used in vaccines poses a health risk. Furthermore, thimerosal has not been used in childhood vaccines since 2001, with the exception of some multi-dose vials of flu vaccines, according to the CDC.

Since the 1930s, vaccines have contained aluminum-based adjuvants, which are substances added to vaccines to help accelerate the immune system’s response in producing antibodies. According to the CDC, “Scientific research has shown the amount of aluminum exposure in people who follow the recommended vaccine schedule is low and is not readily absorbed by the body.” 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.”

In a November 2019 article, headlined “The Autism-Glutamate Connection,” the website promoted the debunked claim that vaccines can cause autism. “Today, the average child receives no less than 36 vaccines before he or she enters school — a tremendous assault on the developing brain,” the article stated. “I believe those who insist vaccines do not cause autism are lying. Their research showing no link has been shown to be phony.”

The claim that the childhood vaccine schedule is “a tremendous assault on the developing brain” is not supported by scientific evidence. A June 2010 study involving 1,000 patients, published in the journal *Pediatrics*, compared children who received on-time vaccinations with those who delayed vaccinations recommended up to 1 year of age, and found that timely vaccination had no adverse effect on how their brains developed. A January 2013 review of existing scientific evidence published by the U.S. Institute of Medicine “found no significant evidence to imply that the recommended immunization schedule is not safe.”

The CDC and many other health and science authorities, including the NHS 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 March 2020 Newsmax article headlined “HPV Vaccine Linked to Autoimmune Conditions,” the website promoted false claims about Gardasil, a vaccine for the human papillomavirus (HPV). The article said, “When the HPV vaccine hit the market, there were reports of autoimmune adverse events that spanned multiple countries, including America.”

The article cited as evidence for its claim reports that were filed with the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting Database (VAERS), maintained by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. However, the VAERS database collects all adverse events following vaccination without establishing a cause-and-effect relationship. A disclaimer on the VAERS website states, “A report to VAERS generally does not prove that the identified vaccine(s) caused the adverse event described. It only confirms that the reported event occurred sometime after the vaccine was given. No proof that the event was caused by the vaccine is required in order for VAERS to accept the report. VAERS accepts all reports without judging whether the event was caused by the vaccine.”

Multiple studies published in peer-reviewed medical journals do not claim, as the Newsmax article did, that the HPV vaccine is linked to autoimmune conditions. A

study of 296,000 women who received the HPV vaccine, published in the British Medical Journal in October 2013, found no association between the vaccine and autoimmune adverse events.

The article included other false claims about the alleged dangers of the HPV vaccine, such as the statement, “I’ve seen young girls suffer premature ovarian failure” after taking the vaccine.

The author provided no evidence for this claim. The CDC says on its website that “there is no current evidence that HPV vaccines cause reproductive problems in women.” In an August 2018 study published in the journal Pediatrics that involved more than 58,000 women who received the HPV vaccine, researchers identified only one case of premature menopause following vaccination.

Gardasil, like other vaccines, went through multiple clinical trials involving 21,000 women to evaluate the vaccine’s safety and effectiveness before being approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in 2006.

In a November 2019 article titled “Getting Safe Drinking Water,” Newsmax promoted false claims about fluoride in drinking water. “You should avoid all fluoridated drinking water, as well as toothpastes, mouthwashes, and dental treatments that contain fluoride, which is a very powerful toxin, even in the concentrations used in drinking water.”

The article added, “Studies have shown that in a concentration just one-half of that used in drinking water (1 part per million) aluminofluoride does significant damage to brain cells.” No specific studies are cited in the article.

The maximum amount of fluoride that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency permits in drinking water is well below toxic levels. Multiple studies dating to the 1950s have found that fluoride is safe to consume in low doses. According to a 2018 statement from the CDC, “Expert panels consisting of scientists from the United States and other countries ... have

considered the available evidence in peer-reviewed literature and have not found convincing scientific evidence linking community water fluoridation with any potential adverse health effect or systemic disorder.”

Newsmax articles have also promoted unproven cancer treatments. An October 2019 article titled “10 Foods That Destroy Cancer Cells” listed turmeric as one of its recommended foods. The article stated, “The miracle ingredient in the spice turmeric is curcumin found in most Indian dishes. Curcumin is an extremely powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory that reduces the metastases of tumors, and may destroy or prevent their growth in the first place.”

Leading medical authorities say there is no evidence to show that turmeric or curcumin can prevent or treat cancer in humans. While noting that turmeric is “very safe” when used in cooking, Cancer Research UK said in an October 2018 article, “we don’t know how safe curcumin is when used for medical reasons.” Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center writes on its website that turmeric may increase users’ risk of bleeding if they are taking blood thinners.

For example, in July 2020, Newsmax published an opinion article by urologist Dr. David Samadi titled “Dr. David Samadi: Let’s Admit Hydroxychloroquine Can Be a Lifesaver for Some.” Samadi wrote in the article, “What bothers me most is the fact hydroxychloroquine worked this whole time.” Samadi added, “The media said it would literally kill you if you took it simply because POTUS promoted it as a cure. If only we could set politics aside by working together for a common good and had known sooner, thousands of lives likely would have been saved.”

Samadi cited a July 2020 observational study conducted at Detroit’s Henry Ford Health System and published in the International Journal of Infectious Diseases which, Samadi said, “has given [hydroxychloroquine] a green light showing it helps by reducing the death rate” for COVID-19 patients.

The article failed to mention that the Henry Ford study was not randomized, a feature of study design in which patients are randomly assigned to receive a treatment. Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the U.S. National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, called the study “flawed” at a July 2020 congressional hearing.

Another July 2020 article, “Twitter Blocks Dr. Samadi for Hydroxychloroquine Comments,” reported on a 24-hour lock that had been placed on Samadi’s Twitter account for breaking the site’s policy on “spreading misleading and potentially harmful information related to COVID-19.” In explaining the story, Newsmax uncritically repeated Samadi’s claims that Hydroxychloroquine works and has worked” and “we’ve now gotten proof that hydroxychloroquine works.”

Contrary to Samadi’s assertion that “hydroxychloroquine worked this whole time,” multiple randomized clinical trials have found that hydroxychloroquine failed to provide benefits to COVID-19 patients. In June 2020, U.K. researchers ended the use of hydroxychloroquine in a large trial that had involved 4,600 patients. “We have concluded that there is no beneficial effect of hydroxychloroquine in patients hospitalised with COVID-19,” according to a statement by researchers Martin Landray and Peter Horby of the RECOVERY (Randomised Evaluation of COVID-19 Therapy) trial.

Another trial involving 400 patients, conducted at the University of Minnesota, found that hydroxychloroquine did not decrease the severity of COVID-19 symptoms over 14 days any better than a placebo in patients who were not hospitalized.

In April 2020, the site published an article titled “Obama Gave \$3.7M Grant to Sketchy China Virology Lab,” which claimed that the Wuhan Institute of Virology in China is “believed to have accidentally released the global coronavirus pandemic because of lax safety protocols, according to U.S. intelligence.” Newsmax cited a report by Fox News that “U.S officials believe the lab accidentally infected an intern.”

Although Newsmax cited a Fox News article, it did not include Fox's reporting that the claims that the virus came from a lab were "not definitive and should not be characterized as such" and that "Some inside the administration and the intelligence and epidemiological communities are more skeptical."

The article's central claim, about a grant given to the Wuhan lab, was also misleading. According to 2020 fact-checking articles from PolitiFact and USA Today, the Wuhan lab received about \$600,000, not \$3.7 million, from the U.S. National Institutes of Health through a grant for the EcoHealth Alliance, an organization that researches emerging infectious diseases. The grant was first approved by the Obama administration in 2014 and was reapproved by the Trump administration in 2019, according to USA Today, although NIH terminated the funding in April 2020.

Newsmax has published older stories that advance conspiracy theories, which are still accessible on the website. In 2013, Newsmax published an article that relayed false claims by a Florida Atlantic university professor who said that the massacre at an elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut, was staged "to push gun control."

While Newsmax characterized the professor, James Tracy, as "known for inciting controversy" and a proponent of "theories about alternate events surrounding the Kennedy assassination, the Oklahoma City bombing, the 9/11 terror attacks, and the movie theater shootings in Aurora, Colo.," the article relayed his claims about the Newtown shooting without disputing them.

The article quoted Tracy as saying, "As documents relating to the Sandy Hook shooting continue to be assessed and interpreted by independent researchers, there is a growing awareness that the media coverage of the massacre of 26 children and adults was intended primarily for public consumption to further larger political ends." Tracy also said that the official account of the shooting "obscured the fact that police encountered and apprehended two additional shooting suspects on the school's grounds within minutes of the crime."

There is no evidence that the shooting was staged, or that there were additional shooting suspects other than gunman Adam Lanza, who fatally shot himself at the school after firing on several elementary school classrooms.

In a December 2012 article that debunked a series of Newtown conspiracy theories, The Atlantic reported that witnesses saw a man being handcuffed and put in a police car on the morning of the shooting. The man was released shortly afterward, The Atlantic reported. The man was not identified, but The Atlantic reported that he was “most likely Chris Manfredonia, the father of a Sandy Hook student, who attempted to sneak into the school after the shooting started.” The Newsmax article remained online as of NewsGuard’s August 2020 review.

The clear majority of false claims NewsGuard found on Newsmax.com were restricted to the site’s health section. However, because this section is prominently placed on the site, because these claims appeared frequently within it, and because they were significantly false on impactful topics — regarding vaccinations and the COVID-19 pandemic — NewsGuard has determined that Newsmax repeatedly publishes false information and does not gather and present news responsibly.

In July 2020, The Daily Beast reported that Newsmax was among a string of news sites, including the Washington Examiner, The Jerusalem Post, Politicalite, and Spiked, which had been duped into publishing opinion articles by a network of fictitious authors advancing pro-Emirati political narratives. Newsmax appears to have published at least four such articles, on topics including the relationship between Dubai’s government and its business community, the use of crowdsourcing by mining companies, and potential investment opportunities in Iraq. Three of the four articles had been removed as of NewsGuard’s August 2020 review, with the last — the Iraq story — remaining online.

Newsmax does not have a stated corrections policy. The two most recent corrections on an originally reported Newsmax article were from October 2019 and January 2018. Because of the website's infrequent publishing of corrections, and because the website has not corrected significantly false content that remains on the website, NewsGuard has determined that Newsmax does not meet NewsGuard's standard for having effective corrections practices.

NewsGuard has exchanged emails and telephone calls with Newsmax since 2018, but has not received responses to a total of 14 followup emails seeking information about the website's content and editorial practices.

In a June 2018 telephone call, Newsmax advised NewsGuard to submit questions about the website by email, then did not reply to two emails and an inquiry sent through a contact form. The site did not respond to two additional emails in 2018 asking about its content.

In January 2019, the website's Opinion Editor, Nick Sanchez, emailed NewsGuard asking about Newsmax's rating, but did not respond to three followup emails by NewsGuard asking questions about its content. NewsGuard sent two more emails to Sanchez in August 2020 and four emails to the website seeking comment on the false content cited above, and its lack of corrections. None received a response.

Articles written by Ruddy end with a description of Newsmax Media Inc. as "one of the country's leading conservative news outlets." Although the site does not otherwise accessibly disclose a political orientation, its news stories do not generally include opinion, and highlight both conservative and liberal views. Opinion articles are typically separated from news stories on the homepage.

Although some headlines on the website have occasionally misstated facts, NewsGuard found that the articles that advanced false claims generally did not repeat those claims in headlines. For example, an

article that promoted false claims about fluoride in drinking water is headlined “Getting Safe Drinking Water.”

Transparency

Newsmax.com discloses that it is owned by Newsmax Media through a logo at the bottom of the website.

Ruddy is listed as the site’s editor-in-chief in his biography, which is found in the site’s Opinion section. The biography also describes him as founder, CEO, and president of Newsmax Media Inc. NewsGuard has determined that this disclosure, while it is not centrally located on the website, meets NewsGuard’s standard for revealing who is in charge.

Most originally reported articles include the writer’s name. While opinion articles include the contributor’s biographical information, news articles generally do not provide writers’ contact or biographical information.

While display advertisements are distinguishable from editorial content, some sponsored content is displayed in the same manner as news stories, with photos and headlines, which does not meet NewsGuard’s standard for clearly labeling advertising.. These sponsored articles — with headlines such as “Trump’s New Tax Law Means Some Retirees in for Big Surprise” and “Special: This Food Helps Liberals Eliminate Toxic Thoughts” — link to pitches for various products but are not labeled.

Although NewsGuard exchanged emails and telephone calls with Newsmax since 2018, it has not received responses to a total of 14 followup emails seeking information about the website’s editorial practices, including six emails in 2020 seeking comment on the website’s labeling of advertising.

History

Newsmax was founded in 1998 by Christopher Ruddy — inspired, he said, by the conservative site the Drudge Report. Michael Clemente, a former Fox News executive, was named CEO of Newsmax TV.

Ruddy's self-styled politics defy easy definition. A conservative and a critic of George W. Bush's war in Iraq, he wrote "The Strange Death of Vincent Foster," a book published in 1997 that promoted conspiracy theories about the suicide of Foster, a prominent Clinton advisor. In more recent years, however, Ruddy has donated to the Clinton Foundation, called Bill Clinton "a friend," and defended Hillary Clinton against accusations that donations to the Clinton Foundation influenced her work as Secretary of State.

Although he is not a registered Republican, Ruddy, a former reporter for the New York Post and the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, told The Atlantic, "My sympathies are with the Republican Party." He is often described as a confidante of President Trump.

Editor's Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on Sept. 2, 2020. Upon further review, its rating has changed to reflect NewsGuard's determination that the website does not meet NewsGuard's standard for not repeatedly publishing false content and for gathering and presenting information responsibly. NewsGuard also determined that the site meets NewsGuard's standard for the disclosure of ownership. The criteria checklist has been adjusted accordingly.

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Ownership and
Financing

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