

Wakefield THE FRAUD: Epitaph for a Lying, Monkey-Killing, Tax-Dodging Narcissistic Sociopath

By David N. Brown

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One of the latest posts from AoA is [Polly Tommey of Autism File Magazine on "Discredited Defamation of Dr. Andrew Wakefield"](#). This is of interest as a concerted defense of Wakefield, who shall henceforth be referred to at all times as Wakefield THE FRAUD, by someone who shows every sign of confusion why Wakefield THE FRAUD is assumed to have committed fraud.

The article relies principally on the favorite canard of Wakefield THE FRAUD, which is to blame his misfortunes on reporter Brian Deer: "There are two main sources behind the idea that Dr. Wakefield is 'discredited.' One is a freelance journalist, Brian Deer; the second is the editor of The Lancet, Dr. Richard Horton. Between them, these two men sowed the seed of the "discredited" myth over a few days many years ago in February 2004." She also complains about being pressured not to give Wakefield a forum: "I have been 'warned' not to print any more articles written by Dr. Andrew Wakefield; I was also warned not to invite him to speak at our conference. Separately, some organizations have warned me that they will not have anything to do with me if I continue to support and publish papers by him... (P)eople who want to contribute to the magazine or to our campaigns say that it's more than their job's worth to be associated with the work of this man more than their job's worth to even listen to what he has to say." Finally, she asks a string of rhetorical questions: "Why is it so important that Dr. Wakefield is seen to be discredited? ...Who stands to gain from this? Who will lose out if the truth is revealed? What is it that people are so frightened of? What is it they don't want us to know?"

If there is any chance of disillusioning the likes of Tommey about Wakefield THE FRAUD, it lies in demolishing his image as a "maverick" who established his reputation with the "controversial" paper alleging a link between autism and the MMR vaccine. If Wakefield THE FRAUD did not originate this image (his credibility and ego would presumably have been better served by an apparent reputation behind his paper!), he has certainly played up to it: His bibliography at Thoughtful House shows no papers published before 1998. But this is at odds with reality on two levels. First, his now-infamous paper had NO impact on professional opinion. Even when many or most of his peers were willing to accept data reported by Wakefield THE FRAUD on good faith, virtually no one took it as proving anything of importance. If not for the evolving MMR "scare", the paper might simply have been ignored and forgotten.

Second, Wakefield THE FRAUD was already well-established as a researcher, but not a particularly "credible" one. He earned his doctorate in 1981, but did not publish until 1987, and published only 3 papers prior to 1991. He published 64 papers from 1991 to 1997, mostly notably a series of papers which argued failed hypothesis that Crohn's is caused by the measles virus and/or MMR vaccine. His career as measured in published papers was not immediately impacted by the autism/MMR "controversy", as he still turned out 9 papers in 1999 and 10 in 2000. His output went into decline thereafter, with 14 papers published in 2001, 2002 and 2003 combined. The debacle that crystallized in 2004 can be considered nothing more or less than a coup de grace to a career in decline.

This is eerily similar to a recurring profile of art forgers. The most striking and counterintuitive aspect of this profile is those who forge are not simply typical artists who give in to the temptation of financial gain. Rather, they are those with a peculiar combination of normal or above-average technical skill and the inability to create a compellingly original work. They turn to forgery because it is the only direction that genuinely suits them. My first inclination was to allow that Wakefield THE FRAUD could, like the artist who turns to forgery only after years of frustrated original efforts, have been honest up to that point. But I wonder if there is a darker tale.

As I have already indicated, it would not have been surprising if there were no strong signs of fraud before the 1998 Lancet paper. But, there were two such charges, both associated with a subset of his Crohn's disease papers arguing a connection to the MMR vaccine. A 1995 Lancet [review](#) concluded that "the research was unsound... The epidemiology was questionable, and the interpretations were unjustified. Inappropriate control groups had been chosen. There were also flaws in virology..." Bertus Rima claims that by 1992, "I came to the conclusion that whatever material was put in front of me was highly selective. When criticisms were made, they were not followed up..." It takes no more than moderate suspicion and cynicism to read these statements (especially the Lancet remark about trouble with the control) as a thinly veiled charge of fraud. There is no reason to doubt that there were many more unstated suspicions about Wakefield THE FRAUD before the paper about which he has been charged with fraud. On this level, Wakefield THE FRAUD presents a strong parallel to Charles Dawson the Victorian semi-pro suspected of Piltdown Man and many earlier and innocuous frauds. (See "Does Fraud need a Profit Motive?") I consider the similarity strong enough to call into question the significance of Wakefield's income from Richard Barr, which almost certainly was the greatest factor in undermining his credibility to the lay public. It is possible that Wakefield THE FRAUD cared more about bolstering his apparent professional status, as is widely thought of Dawson. This conclusion would be especially strong if it can be shown that he had been engaging in similar behavior without comparable financial gain before.

It should be of no small interest that the involvement of Wakefield THE FRAUD with autism litigation would have served to protect him from this kind of scrutiny. In particular, rules of legal confidentiality and possible "non-disclosure" agreements would have protected Wakefield THE FRAUD from open criticism by those he worked with. I consider the suppression of such criticism to be the most significant factor in the longevity of the 1998 "data". Serious complaints about the conduct of Wakefield THE FRAUD by his own staff, particularly Nick Chadwick's charge that Wakefield omitted many negative results of tests for measles virus from the 1998 publication, only came to light in Brian Deer's reports and in Autism Omnibus proceedings. I consider the absence of open criticism by his immediate associates to be another aspect of litigation which could have attracted to Wakefield THE FRAUD at least as much as the money he was paid.

Returning to the pre-1998 papers, there are patterns worth noting in the measles/Crohn's disease publications:

1. [Evidence of persistent measles virus infection in Crohn's disease.](#) Wakefield AJ, Pittilo RM, Sim R, Cosby SL, Stephenson JR, Dhillon AP, Pounder RE. *J Med Virol.* 1993 Apr;39(4):345-53.
2. [Perinatal measles infection and subsequent Crohn's disease.](#) Ekborn A, Wakefield AJ, Zack M, Adami HO. *Lancet.* 1994 Aug 20;344(8921):508-10.
3. [Measles virus in Crohn's disease.](#) Wakefield AJ, Pounder RE. *Lancet.* 1995 Mar 11;345(8950):660.

4. [Crohn's disease: pathogenesis and persistent measles virus infection.](#) Wakefield AJ, Ekbom A, Dhillon AP, Pittilo RM, Pounder RE. *Gastroenterology*. 1995 Mar;108(3):911-6. Review.
5. [Crohn's disease, measles, and measles vaccination: a case-control failure.](#) Thompson NP, Fleming DM, Pounder RE, Wakefield AJ. *Lancet*. 1996 Jan 27;347(8996):263.
6. [Crohn's disease after in-utero measles virus exposure.](#) Ekbom A, Daszak P, Kraaz W, Wakefield AJ. *Lancet*. 1996 Aug 24;348(9026):515-7.
7. [In situ immune responses in Crohn's disease: a comparison with acute and persistent measles virus infection.](#) Wakefield AJ, Sim R, Akbar AN, Pounder RE, Dhillon AP. *J Med Virol*. 1997 Feb;51(2):90-100.
8. [Detection and comparative analysis of persistent measles virus infection in Crohn's disease by immunogold electron microscopy.](#) Daszak P, Purcell M, Lewin J, Dhillon AP, Pounder RE, Wakefield AJ. *J Clin Pathol*. 1997 Apr;50(4):299-304.

The first point of interest is that there is a significant discontinuity between the first and second papers. Not only was the second paper published more than a year later, it was in a different publication and by a completely different set of coauthors. The latter fact is especially odd, because Dhillon, Pounder and Sim had coauthored many papers with Wakefield THE FRAUD before (the former two starting in 1989), while Zack, Adami and Ekbom had never done so before (and only Ekbom would again). A credible explanation is that the first paper was so weak that even the coauthors and publishing journal doubted whether it was worth following up on, and that the second paper was necessary to restore their interest. Second, the Lancet appears to have been unwilling to accept any other original paper from Wakefield THE FRAUD arguing for an association for measles and Crohn's disease until 1996. This would represent the approximate period in which duties as Editor-In-Chief were transferred to Richard Horton. It appears that Wakefield THE FRAUD "circled", moving on when support within one group of researchers and journal was growing thin and returning when further developments had made those in charge less critical.

In this respect, his career represents another, very ominous recurring profile, that of an "Angel of death". Richard Angelo, considered a representative example, followed the typical path of an underachieving narcissist, going through a series of short-lived, low-level jobs. But, since he worked as a male nurse, he left a trail of bodies along with his string of failed jobs. In a pattern shared with a disconcerting number of similar cases, he was repeatedly fired, but not authoritatively denounced as a suspected killer. This allowed him to go from one job to another, killing more and more patients. Investigations into these cases have roused the complaint from hospitals that they have been limited in their ability to denounce ex-employees by the threat of being sued by same. While this has decidedly limited plausibility (I suspect fear of being sued by the victims' survivors had far more to do with it!),

there is certainly a valid point behind it. And, returning to the case at hand, the UK's libel laws are notoriously favorable to plaintiffs, and Wakefield THE FRAUD presents a textbook case of its abuse.

Here are the known frivolous lawsuits, complaints and other harassment by Wakefield THE FRAUD, in chronological order:

3 October 1996: Wakefield files a [complaint](#) with the Broadcasting Standards Commission over a broadcast critical of his claims that MMR was associated with Crohn's disease.

27 February 2004: The *Sunday Times* and the *Lancet* a [letter](#) from Wakefield's attorneys denying Feb. 20 reports that Wakefield failed to disclose conflicts of interest related to the 1998 paper, with the stated purpose "to invite you to agree promptly to publish a full apology to our client".

November 2004: Wakefield files a lawsuit against Brian Deer and Channel 4 for libel. Shortly before withdrawal in late 2005, [Justice Eady](#) questions Wakefield's motives: "Claimant wished to extract whatever advantage he could from the existence of the proceedings while not wishing to progress them or to give the Defendants an opportunity of meeting the claims."

21 June 2005: *Cambridge Evening News* receives a [letter](#) from Wakefield's attorneys over a citation of a Brian Deer report (worded as "the article alleged..."), calling on the paper to "publish an apology".

July 2007: Martin J. Walker initiates [smears](#) against Brian Deer. Claims include allegation that Deer initiated GMC hearings against Wakefield. Though Wakefield condemns Walker on 3 November 2008, Deer reports a December 2009 newsletter for Wakefield's "network" requesting donations to pay an *additional* 5,500 pounds to Walker.

13 March 2009: Andrew Wakefield files complaint with Press Complaint Commission, over Brian Deers Feb. 2009 story reporting evidence that he misreported medical histories in *Lancet* 1998 paper. Includes statement that Deer "initiated the investigation by the GMC in the first place".

20 March 2009: Andrew Wakefield (THE FRAUD) files addendum to complaint over Brian Deer's statement, I did not lay the initial complaint against Wakefield. This allegation is a fabrication, albeit rather a small one in the MMR issue." Bizarrely, Wakefield THE FRAUD presents truth of this statement as immaterial: "whether or not Mr. Deer initiated the GMC investigation as 'complainant' in his letter dated Feb. 25, 2004, or acted as an 'informant' in an investigation already begun by the GMC, he did not disclose his own direct participation in the GMC investigation in his most recent accounts in the *Sunday Times*, intending to give the public the misimpression that he was acting as a neutral and disinterested reporter."

3 July 2009: Thoughtful House release, "Press Complaints Commission Orders Sunday Times to Remove MMR journalist's Stories on Dr. Wakefield from Paper's Web Site", alleges, "The PCC decision today appears to indicate there are questions about the accuracy of the Deer stories," but no statement to this effect is quoted.

9 July 2009: Second press release, "Sunday Times Defies Press Complaints Commission", alleges that "the Sunday Times has now defied the PCC by putting the stories back online after complaining Dr. Wakefield publicly announced the PCC's directive."

The possible effect of threats of litigation on the earlier career of Wakefield THE FRAUD can be seen

in his attempts to link Crohn's disease with measles infection. Again and again Wakefield THE FRAUD not only failed to make his case but used methods which would fully justify charges of fraud. Yet he was not only able to keep ahead of suspicions but publish his work in at least one journal where he had openly been denounced. Regardless of what Tomme et al say and might believe, the credibility of Wakefield THE FRAUD was clearly dwindling well before Brian Deer came along. I interpret this as evidence that the scientific community as large was already avoiding and excluding him. Yet, even in the death spiral of ca. 2004-2006, his peers remained ludicrously circumspect about questioning his honesty. It took Brian Deer's intrusive presence to call Wakefield THE FRAUD what he is.

That leaves us with the question of what we, the representatives variously of science, the media and/or the autism community, are to do with Wakefield. The ethical standards and traditions of science and journalism are very clear: Once someone has committed fraud (or, in practice, even fallen under strong suspicion of it), no subsequent work is to be trusted. We censor him, and if necessary censor those who persist in allowing him to speak. There are times when this may be considered genuinely unfortunate, as in the poignant case of Kammerer. But Wakefield THE FRAUD gives us no cause for mercy or regret. The evidence of his personal guilt in the outright fabrication of data is stronger than it was for Kammerer. But Kammerer put a bullet in his own head where Wakefield THE FRAUD not only lives but persists in defending the indefensible, and profiting from it. Having already participated in the waste of over \$20M on publicly funded litigation, and forced the waste of a million or so more on the disciplinary hearings against him, Wakefield THE FRAUD continues to accept money from those he can still deceive, especially parents of disabled children. He pockets about 300K for himself, and funnels the rest into any number of opaque enterprises, including the "charity" "Visceral in Bath", which blogger "[Documentz](#)" has suggested to be "a tax-evasion device". Throughout, Wakefield THE FRAUD has shown no remorse, nor even the candor of a forger who, having been caught anyway, cheerfully shows how easily his victims were fooled. He isn't just scum, he's the mineralized crust underneath the scum. He isn't just a criminal, he's the criminal that the thieves, killers and drug dealers look down on. He isn't just a disgrace to the species *H. sapiens*, he's an embarrassment to the apes, monkeys and lemurs (who already have cause to be pissed off over the pointlessly slaughter of monkeys for his probably fraudulent and certainly worthless *Neurotoxicology* paper.) He is above all a FRAUD, and it is because he went to such great lengths to deter others from saying it that I am saying it as emphatically and often as I am now. And if Wakefield ever threatens to sue me, I will give my form response: While you're at it, tell Fox Studios about *Aliens Vs. Exotroopers!*

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