

THE UK'S CHANNEL 4 TV: PRODUCERS OR PLAGIARISTS?

INSIDE A BOUTIQUE CHANNEL 4 CURRENT AFFAIRS PROGRAMME

The first page of Google (apparently now the primary investigative tool of Channel 4 current affairs programme-makers) yields the following definition of plagiarism (from plagiarism.org):

“According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, to ‘plagiarize’ means:

- to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own
- to use (another's production) without crediting the source
- to commit literary theft
- to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source

“In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else's work and lying about it afterward.”

Science Direct gives the following:

“Plagiarism is defined as ‘the appropriation of another person’s ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit.’”

Oxford University’s guidance to students explains:

“Plagiarism is presenting someone else’s work or ideas as your own, with or without their consent, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement. All published and unpublished material, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, is covered under this definition. Plagiarism may be intentional or reckless, or unintentional. Under the regulations for examinations, intentional or reckless plagiarism is a disciplinary offence.”

None of this is new. According to a printed Shorter Oxford Dictionary, “plagiarism” means:

- (1) “The taking and using as one’s own of the thoughts, writings, or inventions of another,” or (2) “A purloined idea, design, passage, or work.”

But, of course, Channel 4 and its contractors know all this.

BRIAN DEER'S INVESTIGATION**CHANNEL 4'S PROGRAMME**

"Almost incredibly, the trigger for what would become a worldwide controversy over vaccine safety was a single scientific research paper published in a medical journal—the *Lancet*—in February 1998."
(<https://briandeer.com/mmr/lancet-summary.htm> — *Online for a decade*)

Note: This once-novel proposition, plus the investigation summary at briandeer.com, along with Deer's reporting and book, The Doctor Who Fooled the World (released to reviewers in November 2019), are the sources for the foundational premise and narrative spine throughout the Channel 4 programme, "The Anti-Vax Conspiracy," broadcast on June 1, 2021. The programme identifies Wakefield about every sixty seconds from start to finish.

Four surrogate participants were recruited by the programme makers to voice reporting by Deer for the camera. These were Dr. Paul Offit, Dr. Fiona Godlee, Roderick Boyd, and Imran Ahmed.

Setting up a ubiquitous de facto vaccine industry spokesperson, Dr. Paul Offit, as if it were he who exposed Wakefield's fraud, he was asked: "So you've been very critical of Wakefield over the years. I guess you were never destined to be friends, right?"

Dr. Offit: "... Andrew Wakefield in 1998 published a paper in the journal *Lancet* claiming that the combined measles–mumps–rubella vaccine caused autism..."

Programme error: The paper made no claim that MMR caused autism, and expressly stated that no causal connection was proven.

Note: This and another egregious error in Dr. Offit's broadcast contribution reveal negligence and/or misconduct by the programme makers, who either never read Wakefield's paper—the foundational evidence for the programme's allegations of fraud against him— or knowingly allowed viewers to be misled.

"It started with fear." (*Opening sentence of commentary, written by Deer, Dispatches, November 2004*) At the time, that *Dispatches* was credited: "An investigation by Brian Deer."

"It started with a lie." (*Opening sentence of the programme's commentary at 00.30, with images from Deer's November 2004 Dispatches.*)

<p>“On the day that his career as a doctor ended, he looked like he couldn’t give a damn. Leaving his seat vacant at the hearing in London, he instead took a chair in New York City. At NBC’s Midtown studios. With no prosecuting counsel, or investigative journalist rooting through the evidence, at 7:43 he settled for six minutes with the ‘face of the <i>Today</i> show,’ Matt Lauer.</p> <p>“It may sound like a strange way to start the interview,’ Lauer began, like he was quizzing an old friend about a favorite breakfast cereal, ‘but do I still refer to you as “doctor””?</p> <p>“Wakefield grinned. Easy peasy. ‘Yes,’ he replied. ‘They can’t take away the fact that I have a medical degree.’” <i>(Opening of chapter 27, The Doctor Who Fooled the World.)</i></p>	<p>“On the day that the General Medical Council finally ruled against Andrew Wakefield, stripping him of his medical license, Wakefield wasn’t in London to hear it. He was in a TV studio in America.</p> <p>“Matt Lauer: ‘And Dr. Andrew Wakefield is here for an exclusive interview. Doctor, good morning. Do I still refer to you as “doctor””?</p> <p>Wakefield: ‘Yes, they can’t take away the fact that I have a medical degree.’” <i>(Commentary, 15.40)</i></p>
<p>“But it was Wakefield who stepped up to seize the modern crown as the ‘father of the anti-vaccine movement.’” <i>(Prologue, “Resurrection,” The Doctor Who Fooled the World.)</i></p> <p>Deer reports: “How the case against the MMR vaccine was fixed” and “How the vaccine crisis was meant to make money.” <i>(Brian Deer, British Medical Journal, Jan 5 & 11, 2011.)</i></p>	<p>“The guy who triggered all this, the granddaddy of the anti-vaccine movement, the first person to realize you could target the vulnerable using misinformation about vaccines, and build a business, build a living, build a franchise off it. <i>(Ahmed, 08.37)</i></p> <p><u><i>Note: In a pamphlet, Ahmed acknowledges reliance on Deer’s BMJ reports opposite.</i></u></p>
<p>“The ex-doctor without patients was back.” <i>(Closing sentence of the Prologue, “Resurrection,” The Doctor Who Fooled the World.)</i></p>	<p>Andrew Wakefield. And he’s back.” <i>(Ahmed, 08.39)</i></p>

<p>“And from a PhD student on the North Island of New Zealand: ‘I hoped he’d just crawled under a rock.’” (<i>Prologue, The Doctor Who Fooled the World.</i>)</p>	<p>“The big surprise for most people was that Andrew Wakefield did not crawl under a rock and disappear.” (<i>Dr. Godlee, 16.08</i>)</p>
<p>“Focus: Hidden records show MMR truth. A Sunday Times investigation has found that altered data was behind the decade-long scare over vaccination.” (<i>By-line “Brian Deer,” February 8, 2009.</i>)</p>	<p>“What transpired when the cases of these children, their medical records, were properly looked at, against what was published in <i>The Lancet</i> paper was that Wakefield had manipulated the information to fit his case.” (<i>Dr. Godlee, 12.39</i>)</p>
<p>“But courage in science isn’t proving yourself right. It’s in your efforts to prove yourself wrong. And, there, Bridget’s son [Wakefield] had an issue with himself that would scar more lives than his own.” (<i>Ch. 1, The Doctor Who Fooled the World.</i>)</p> <p>“One of the professors who taught him at medical school described him as ‘one of the most attention-seeking individuals’ he’d ever met”. (<i>Epilogue</i>)</p> <p>“The ex-doctor, meanwhile, sought a subset of parents — parents of children with autism and similar issues — who were hurt, angry, and neglected.” (<i>Prologue, “Resurrection.”</i>)</p>	<p>“He has a terrific belief in his own rightness. So there’s a kind of narcissism combined with a cause, combined with a group of vulnerable people who feel neglected and let down.” (<i>Dr. Godlee, 20.25</i>)</p> <p><u><i>Note: There is no possible source for this opinion other than The Doctor Who Fooled the World. Dr. Godlee will confirm this.</i></u></p>

<p>“He was promised help for a study of 150 children (to try to replicate his Lancet claims from just 12)... But the study did not happen. The 1998 Lancet research had been a sham. Trying to replicate it with greater numbers would have been hopeless.” (“How the vaccine crisis was meant to make money.” <i>Brian Deer, BMJ, January 11, 2011. Also, at length in two chapters of The Doctor Who Fooled the World.</i>)</p>	<p>“There was a simple way that Andrew Wakefield could have silenced his critics: repeat the study. But he didn’t.” (<i>Commentary, 16.22</i>)</p>
<p>“Thoughtful House”: (pp. 227–31, 234, 238–39, 247, 253, 276, 289, 308, 311, mostly Ch. 21, “Texas,” <i>The Doctor Who Fooled the World</i>)</p>	<p>“I’ve just been fascinated by how Andrew Wakefield has been able to reinvent himself after being run out of Britain. When he comes to America, he actually lines up opening a nonprofit based in Austin, Texas, called Thoughtful House.” (<i>Boyd, 18.10</i>)</p> <p><u>Note: In an email, Boyd acknowledges <i>The Doctor Who Fooled the World</i> as his “foundational text” and wrote to Deer praising the journalism within it.</u></p> <p><u>Programme error: Boyd complains: “The producers managed to get my org’s name wrong.”</u></p>

<p>“A board of directors brought advice and credibility. From calendar Year 1 —2004— this included the chief executive of Dell Financial Services; a Venezuelan-born movie producer; a retired major general; a former Major League Baseball player, and a country singer with the Dixie Chicks band.” (Ch. 21, “Texas,” <i>The Doctor Who Fooled the World.</i>)</p>	<p>“The money comes from a small but very well-heeled network of donors and philanthropists.” (Boyd, 17.21)</p>
<p>“This was a Manhattan socialite, Jane Johnson, thirty-eight: supemodel slim, exquisitely styled, whose family forbears once controlled Johnson & Johnson... Jane’s personal foundation gave a whopping million dollars toward the efforts of the doctor without patients.” (Ch. 21, “Texas,” <i>The Doctor Who Fooled the World.</i>)</p>	<p>“Jane Johnson is preposterously wealthy, heiress to the Johnson & Johnson fortune.” (Boyd, 18.48)</p> <p><u>Note: Jane Johnson is a remarkably private woman, with a common name, and is impossible to find on Google without additional personal search terms. Boyd simply took this information from the book, regarding which he wrote to Deer: “It took me (then a relative newbie to this forever war) about 8–10 hits to get to your stuff. Obviously, once I did, I used it as a foundational text...”</u></p>
<p>“... and his associate, Del Bigtree (now earning \$146,000 a year, through a new entity called the “Informed Consent Action Network,” funded by the New York hedge fund millionaire Bernard Selz.” (Ch. 31, <i>The Doctor Who Fooled the World.</i>)</p> <p>(“Selz, Bernard and Lisa,” pp. 334–35, 345, <i>The Doctor Who Fooled the World.</i>)</p>	<p>“After her comes Lisa Selz, whose husband, Bernard Selz and is a famous Wall Street banker and hedge fund manager. Millions of philanthropic dollars just sitting there. He’s able to begin sort of empire building, and that’s the function of the patrons that he’s able to develop along the way.” (Boyd, 18.50)</p>

<p>“I admit I found Wakefield incapable of embarrassment. I believed he was a man without conscience.” (Ch. 15, <i>The Doctor Who Fooled the World.</i>)</p> <p>“He was untroubled by conscience.” (Ch. 21, “Texas.”)</p> <p>“The man, meanwhile, untroubled by conscience...” (Epilogue)</p> <p>“Wakefield’s mothers felt guilt, so that he didn’t have to. They bore remorse and shame on his behalf.” (Epilogue, <i>The Doctor Who Fooled the World.</i>)</p>	<p>Responding to the question: “Do you think he sleeps well at night?”</p> <p>“Andrew Wakefield has absolutely no trouble sleeping at night. And I’m fairly confident that he’s actually never sleeping better.” (Boyd, 51.32)</p> <p><u>Note: Boyd has no direct knowledge of Wakefield, his lifestyle and activities, and has no background in the vaccines issue. He was commissioned and paid to effectively voice Deer’s findings from the United States.</u></p>
<p>“The last I heard of him, he was shackled up in Miami, Florida, with the supermodel, divorced wife of a billionaire...The lady was Elle Macpherson (a.k.a. ‘the Body’)...” (Epilogue, <i>The Doctor Who Fooled the World.</i>)</p>	<p>“Andrew Wakefield is living in south Florida in an estate with Elle Macpherson.” (Boyd, 51.34)</p> <p><u>Programme error: Boyd wasn’t up to date. By this time, Wakefield had moved to a boat.</u></p>
<p>“They’d lined up their ducks with the same ol’ same ‘ol’: MMR → persistent measles virus → enterocolitis → leaky gut → opioid excess in blood to the brain → regressive autism.” (Ch. 17, <i>The Doctor Who Fooled the World, and other chapters describing the same thing.</i>)</p>	<p>“Wakefield’s unfounded theory was that the MMR vaccine damaged the gut allowing toxins to leak into the brain.” (Commentary, 23.18)</p>

<p>“Pediatricians generally said that any perception of a link between such vaccines and autism was the result of a simple coincidence. The first dose was almost always given in the second year of life, and this was the same window in which the first symptoms of autism were most typically recognized by parents.” (Ch. 5, <i>The Doctor Who Fooled the World.</i>)</p> <p>“It was developmental pediatrics 101 that the first symptoms of autism usually surfaced, or were recognized, sometime in the second year of life.” (Ch. 32)</p>	<p>“One thing that allows the belief to take hold for parents: Wakefield’s theory that vaccines caused autism is the fact that signs of autism become more evident around 18 months to 2 years old—the same time that children received the MMR” (<i>Commentary</i>, 21.56)</p> <p><u>Programme error: MMR is recommended in both the US and the UK at twelve months.</u></p>
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<p>“And the case he made—which was rarely not for profit—was that <i>his</i> big ideas must prevail.” (<i>Epilogue, The Doctor Who Fooled the World. The entire book reaches the judgment, opposite, borrowed by Dr. Godlee for the programme after she read the book.</i>)</p>	<p>“It’s hard to understand what his motives might be, except for his own aggrandizement and enrichment.” (<i>Dr. Godlee, 23.53</i>)</p> <p><u>Note 1: Dr. Godlee warned the producers in an email: “I think there is more here than I can with full confidence and credibility cover. In particular, the second list where you ask for more detail—these are things that should be covered by Brian Deer rather than me... Again, Brian Deer is the person to ask for documentation.”</u></p> <p><u>Note 2: After broadcast, Dr. Godlee emailed Deer: “I am sure that I said on camera more than a few times that what we published in The BMJ was an investigation by Brian Deer. My understanding from the film makers was that they had contacted you but you had declined to be involved. I have to say that I was surprised on viewing the film that there was no mention of you in it.”</u></p>
<p><u>Note: Every proposition from Dr. Godlee opposite was first published in The Sunday Times more than twelve years ago under the by-line “Brian Deer.” as well as in The Doctor Who Fooled the World.</u></p>	<p>“Andrew Wakefield had been paid to do this by a lawyer who was aiming to sue the manufacturers of the vaccine, was being paid £150 an hour, and ended up earning more than £400,000 for the work he was doing. And none of this was declared in the publication in <i>The Lancet</i>, Now, what that meant was that the condition that Andrew Wakefield said he was discovering was something he was actually going out and looking for.” (<i>Dr. Godlee, 13.04</i>)</p>

<p><u>Note: Everything opposite from Dr. Godlee arose from Deer's findings and a GMC investigation into information published in The Sunday Times or supplied to the regulator by Deer. He was the only reporter to follow the hearing. The BMJ opposed the GMC's decision to investigate Wakefield.</u></p>	<p>"Andrew Wakefield deliberately rigged the results to support his claims. In January 2010, the General Medical Council concluded what was its longest ever fitness to practice hearing, the result of which was a few months later that Andrew Wakefield was struck off. He had been dishonest, unethical and showing a callous disregard for his patients." (Dr. Godlee, 14.29)</p>
<p>News headline and story: "MMR scare doctor planned rival vaccine." By-line: "Brian Deer." (The Sunday Times, November 14, 2004. At greater length in the BMJ, 2011 and, at yet greater length, in The Doctor Who Fooled the World.)</p>	<p>"While at the press conference he was warning people against the triple vaccine, he stood to make millions from a single measles vaccine." (Dr. Godlee, continuing from 13.04)</p>
<p>"Deliberate, high-level deception of the American people, with disastrous consequences for its children's health." (Ch. 29, The Doctor Who Fooled the World.)</p>	<p>"Deliberate, high-level deception of the American people, with disastrous consequences for its children's health." (Wakefield, 30.00)</p>
<p>"Now the ex-doctor had found a new vocation. 'If you want to beat the media, you become the media,' he would declare. 'I am now a filmmaker.'" (Part 4, "Avenged," Ch. 29, The Doctor Who Fooled the World.)</p>	<p>"I am going to become a film maker." (Wakefield, 29.37)</p>
<p>Anybody else might have said, "I'm sorry." (Ch. 21, "Texas," The Doctor Who Fooled the World.)</p> <p>"Sorry... But what he still wouldn't do was regret anything of substance." (Ch. 28)</p>	<p>"Why he was unable to say he was wrong here was beyond me." (Dr. Offit, 15.06)</p> <p><u>Note: Last September, Dr. Offit reviewed The Doctor Who Fooled the World.</u></p>

<p>“But as study after study dismissed any autism link, Thompson’s managers had lost interest in his area of achievement, and he longed to regain their attention... He was captured in the recordings laughing inappropriately, bad-mouthing colleagues (a veteran epidemiologist was ‘like a used car salesman,’ a female researcher ‘a twenty-five-year-old bimbo’)” (Ch. 29, <i>The Doctor Who Fooled the World.</i>)</p>	<p>“The insider is a <i>disgruntled</i> CDC scientist.” (Commentary, 31.35. <i>Emphasis added</i>)</p>
<p>“I would never suggest that any parent avoid vaccinating children of any race.” (Ch. 29, <i>The Doctor Who Fooled the World.</i>)</p>	<p>“Wakefield’s insider put out a statement saying he would never suggest any parent avoid vaccinating their children.” (Commentary, 32.17)</p>
<p>“It was a poisonous charge... by those who he felt had <i>shunned him.</i>” (Ch. 15, <i>The Doctor Who Fooled the World. Emphasis added.</i>)</p> <p>“But cold, as <i>revenge</i> is reputedly best served.” (Ch. 29, “<i>The Projection,</i>” <i>The Doctor Who Fooled the World. Emphasis added.</i>)</p>	<p>“... could really further Wakefield’s aspirations to widen his audience and <i>get back at the medical establishment.</i>” (Commentary, 37.29. <i>Emphasis added</i>)</p>
<p>“Bernard Selz, seventy-nine, and his wife, Lisa Selz, sixty-eight, were reported to have given \$3 million to Wakefield, Tommey, and Bigtree—including two hundred thousand for Wakefield to sue the <i>British Medical Journal</i> and me.” (Ch. 30, <i>The Doctor Who Fooled the World.</i>)</p>	<p>“First, he persuades his billionaire donors, the Selz’s to give him a million dollars. Next, he recruits a daytime TV producer Del Bigtree.” (Commentary 30.09)</p> <p><u><i>Programme errors: The Selzs aren’t billionaires; the sum given is wrong</i></u></p>

<p>“Mr Deer’s implications of fraud against me are claims that a trained physician and researcher of good standing had suddenly decided he was going to fake data for his own enrichment.” (<i>Andrew Wakefield, complaint re. a Sunday Times report by Deer, “MMR doctor fixed data on autism,” dated February 8, 2009.</i>)</p> <p>“Nailed: Dr Andrew Wakefield and the MMR-autism fraud: Summary of Brian Deer’s investigation into a threat to children’s health” (<i>briandeer.com, published for years from at least February 11, 2010, a year before he published in the BMJ.</i>)</p> <p>https://web.archive.org/web/20100211160223/http://briandeer.com/mmr/lancet-summary.htm</p> <p>“My investigation of the MMR issue exposed the frauds behind Wakefield’s research. Triggering the longest ever UK General Medical Council fitness to practise hearing, and forcing the Lancet to retract the paper, last May it led to Wakefield and Walker-Smith being struck off the medical register.” (“How the case against the MMR vaccine was fixed,” <i>BMJ, January 5, 2011.</i>)</p>	<p>“It started with a lie.” (<i>Commentary, 00.30</i>)</p> <p>“I think Andrew Wakefield has perpetrated one of the biggest frauds in the world.” (<i>Dr. Offit, 9.50</i>)</p> <p>“He just made it up.” (<i>Dr. Offit, 10.34</i>)</p> <p>“What we now know is the study published in the <i>Lancet</i> was not only bad science, and unethical science, it was fraud.” (<i>Dr. Godlee, 14.22</i>)</p> <p>“Andrew Wakefield deliberately rigged the results.” (<i>Dr. Godlee, 14.29</i>)</p> <p>“Even before the full truth of the fraud emerged, Wakefield fled to the states.” (<i>Commentary, 16.25</i>)</p> <p>“There are a lot of fraudsters in science and in medicine. What sets this fraud apart is the scale of the consequences and the impact on the public’s health globally.” (<i>Dr. Godlee, 01.07.06</i>)</p> <p>“It was a lie all along.” (<i>Commentary, 01.06.28</i>)</p>
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<p>Book title: <i>The Doctor Who Fooled the World: Science, Deception, and the War on Vaccines.</i></p>	<p>“And the man who lit the touch paper of this modern movement, who led this march through telling people <i>not to be fooled</i> by this conspiracy against them? <i>Science</i> should have prevailed. It was a <i>lie</i> all along. But whether it’s down to timing or personality, he got away with it and, in the end, <i>makes fools of us all.</i>” (Concluding commentary. <i>Emphasis added.</i>)</p>
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Comment: That the unmasking of *all* Wakefield’s known fraud and misconduct arose from an investigation by one newspaper reporter, and not thanks to scientists, doctors, or the medical establishment, was important information for viewers. Deer complained to the UK broadcasting regulator Ofcom that the programme wasn’t only misleading but was unfair to Wakefield because the provenance of the finding of fraud was withheld. None of the programme participants played any role in that finding, although Dr. Godlee did comment on it in an editorial ten years ago in the *British Medical Journal*:

“It has taken the diligent scepticism of one man, standing outside medicine and science, to show that the paper was in fact an elaborate fraud.”

Ofcom ignored Deer’s complaint, apparently on grounds that Deer lacked standing under the Broadcasting Code because he didn’t participate in the programme.

This graph of MMR uptake in England and Wales illustrates the impact of Deer’s investigation, publishing first in February 2004 in The Sunday Times, followed by more reporting in the BMJ, Daily Mail, Daily Telegraph, and at briandeer.com. The graph was created by the former Health Protection Agency from data for the final nine months of each year aggregated with the first three months of the next.

