

Monsanto's attacks on science and scientists



Deceptive tactics

- How Monsanto and allies used deceptive and non-transparent tactics to try to discredit a scientific study that threatened the company's interests – and to smear the scientists themselves
- Company's interests often represented by third parties such as public relations firms or ostensibly independent academics and scientists (the “third-party” PR technique).

Séralini study

- Example: Séralini study
- Most extreme case of malicious and scientifically inaccurate public relations tactics being used to kill an inconvenient study
- Followup research shows those who attacked the study were unjustifiably putting public health at risk.

The study

- First published 2012
- Long-term toxicity study found 2 Monsanto products, GM herbicide-tolerant maize and the Roundup herbicide it was engineered to tolerate, had toxic effects on rats fed over long-term.
- Effects: liver and kidney damage
- Trend of increased tumours.

Backlash

- Within hours, massive PR campaign sprang up to try to discredit the study and pressurize the editor of Food and Chemical Toxicology to retract it.
- UK-based Science Media Centre (SMC) in the forefront of the attacks.
- SMC disseminated quotes denigrating the study from third-party experts. SMC is 70% funded by corporations, including Monsanto.

SMC claims credit for killing study

- SMC director later said that she took pride in the fact that the SMC's "emphatic thumbs down" on the study "had largely been acknowledged throughout UK newsrooms".
- Several TV news programmes rejected the story after reading the quotes.
- SMC quotes were also circulated to media by Monsanto and GMO lobby.

Bruce Chassy

- The SMC's quotes appeared in media coverage worldwide.
- One appeared in New York Times with the scathing comments of Bruce M. Chassy, professor emeritus of food science at the University of Illinois.

Chassy: Monsanto funding

- This year Chassy was exposed as having received **\$57,000** from Monsanto over less than two years.
- In promoting GM crops and associated pesticides, Chassy failed to disclose his relationship with Monsanto.
- Only described himself by university role.
- Chassy & Univ of Illinois told Monsanto to put payments through Univ of Illinois Foundation – records shielded from public scrutiny.

Forbes key to attacks

- Forbes magazine published 6 attack pieces in 10 days targeting Séralini's research and the researchers.
- Drew on quotes from Science Media Centre.
- One article labelled the paper a fraud.
- Written by US former tobacco lobbyist and GMO/pesticide defender Henry I. Miller, with Bruce Chassy.

Retract the paper!

Forbes article accused Séralini of

- "gross scientific misconduct"
- having "a long and sordid history" of "activism".

Told editor of Food and Chemical Toxicology the only "honorable course of action... would be to retract the paper immediately".

Justice at last

- Four years later, this September, Séralini won a libel case against the French news magazine Marianne and its reporter, who had repeated Henry Miller's allegation of scientific fraud.

Back to anti-Séralini smear campaign ...

- Online petition or “ipetition” was set up, demanding in the name of "the scientific community" that Séralini hand over all his raw data.
- Petition was aggressively promoted on social media, with implication that the researchers had something to hide.

Repeated tactics

- John Vidal in the Guardian described attacks on Séralini & team as "a triumph for the scientific and corporate establishment which has used similar tactics to crush other scientists":
 - ❑ Arpad Pusztai... sacked after research suggested GM potatoes damaged health of rats
 - ❑ David Quist and Ignacio Chapela – GM contamination of native Mexican maize.

Quist and Chapela

- GMWatch research found the retraction campaign was carefully orchestrated from the start by Monsanto's PR people.
- It used proxies (fake people) to whip up feeling against Chapela by branding him an "activist" rather than a scientist and by maintaining his findings were bogus.

Monsanto PR man at the heart

- GMWatch research suggested that at the heart of the Quist/Chapela retraction campaign sat Monsanto's former director of corporate communications, Jay Byrne.
- Byrne had gone on to found his own internet PR company **v-Fluence**, which is based, like Monsanto, in St Louis.

AgBioWorld the conduit

- Although Byrne seemed to be the Quist/Chapela campaign's chief architect, its main conduit was the lobby group AgBioWorld.
- AgBioWorld overseen by the GM scientist C.S. Prakash.

Anti-Séralini campaign

- First signatory on the ipetition against Séralini is Prakash.
- Prakash also set up earlier version of the ipetition which identifies him as sponsor.

AgBioWorld admits authorship of petition

- After GMWatch flagged up likely role of Prakash and AgBioWorld in the petition, AgBioWorld acknowledged authorship in a press release, which said "the petitioning scientists are calling on the publishing journal editors to retract the Séralini study" if Séralini failed to give in to their demand that he hand over his raw data.

AgBioWorld and v-Fluence close

- New evidence confirms extraordinarily close relationship between AgBioWorld and v-Fluence.
- AgBioWorld 2012 press release archived in early form in internet archive in January 2013: source given as AgBioWorld Foundation.
- But at the foot of the press release are the words, “All Press Releases By v-Fluence Interactive”.

Scientists call on French researchers to release GMO test data

More than 700 scientists and academicians have signed petitions calling on French researcher Gilles-Eric Seralini to release research data behind his recently publicized health claims associated with biotech crops.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRLog (Press Release) - Oct. 15, 2012 - More than 700 scientists and academicians have signed petitions calling on French researcher Gilles-Eric Seralini to release research data behind his recently publicized health claims associated with biotech crops. The signers include senior scientists, prize winning researchers and respected academics from a wide range of highly regarded research institutions, international organizations and universities from around the globe.

The petitioners, from every continent representing more than 40 countries, are urging transparency in the promotion of sound science on important issues of public health. They are joining calls by regulatory bodies including the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) to Seralini and his collaborators at the Committee for Research & Independent Information on Genetic Engineering (CRIIGEN) to provide the research data to back up their allegations of health and safety risks links to GMOs.

"The serious demands by Seralini that regulatory bodies and the public make decisions about how food is grown based on his report require that he be transparent about the means and measures by which he has drawn conclusions," said Klaus Ammann, PhD, professor plant systems, Biosafety Committee of the Government of Switzerland, Chairman EFB Section on Biodiversity, University of Bern, Switzerland notes, "Anything less than the normal, full disclosures of data, leaves us all victims of political manipulation and highly theatrical propaganda – this is not science."

"The basic code of scientific ethics requires that scientists release all data associated with a peer reviewed scientific paper," noted Bruce Chassy, PhD, professor emeritus, Food Science & Nutrition, University of Illinois, United States.

"The claims made by this study contradict an extensive body of independent and widely accepted

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Tags : [Seralini](#), [CRIIGEN](#), [gmo](#), [gmos](#), [GE Foods](#), [gene biotechnology](#)
Shortcut : <http://prlog.org/11999640>

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Cover-up?

- Interestingly – the press release as it now exists on the PRLog website has had all mention of v-Fluence removed.

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Tags : [Gmo](#), [Gmos](#), [Genetically Modified](#), [Genetically Engineered](#)

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AgBioWorld and v-Fluence interchangeable?

- This suggests belated attempt to cover up the link between AgBioWorld and v-Fluence.
- To us, it look as if AgBioWorld (which claims it presents science-based information) and v-Fluence (a PR firm run by Monsanto's former communications chief) are interchangeable.

Retraction campaign succeeds

- The retraction campaign against the Séralini study was successful – editor of Food and Chemical Toxicology, A. Wallace Hayes, retracted it after a year of sustained pressure (but it was subsequently republished by another journal).
- Retraction followed the appointment of a former Monsanto scientist, Richard E. Goodman, to the journal's editorial board.
- Goodman had already asked Monsanto to provide him with arguments against the study.

Journal editor invites Monsanto to review papers submitted

- In November 2012, when the "Séralini affair" was in full flow, editor Hayes told Monsanto employees that Goodman would now be in charge of biotechnology at the journal.
- Hayes formally invited Monsanto toxicologists to appraise for acceptance or rejection the studies on GMOs that were submitted to the journal for review.

Followup study confirms Séralini study was on right track

- Was Séralini study just “bad science”?
- Carefully designed pilot study, offered valuable data to inform followup research.

Liver & kidney damage from Roundup reflected in new findings

- One such followup study published last year
- Reflects the finding of the Séralini study that the lowest dose of Roundup tested – an environmentally relevant dose – caused liver and kidney damage in the rats.

The method

- New study, led by Dr Michael Antoniou of King's College London, analyzed liver and kidneys from 10 female rats in the Séralini study that had received the lowest dose of Roundup in their drinking water.
- These were compared with the liver and kidneys of 10 control animals receiving plain drinking water (no Roundup).

Low dose – claimed “safe”

- This lowest dose resulted in a daily intake that is 75,000 times below the EU acceptable daily intake (ADI) for glyphosate and 437,500 times below the US chronic reference dose (ADI equivalent).
- – dose was far below the level claimed by regulators to be safe to consume on a daily basis over the long term.

The new analysis

- Researchers subjected the rats' liver and kidneys to transcriptomics analysis. This measures the level of expression (function) of all the genes present in the animal.
- Established method that is highly predictive of health or disease status of the organ system under investigation.

The findings

- Over 4,000 genes in the liver and over 4,000 genes in the kidney were either reduced or increased in their expression in the Roundup treatment group, compared with controls.
- Results highly statistically significant.
- Over 1,000 gene functions were similarly disturbed in both organs.

Meaning

- Gene expression changes reflected the liver and kidney pathologies found in the Séralini study.
- The alterations in gene expression profile in both liver and kidneys correlated with disease states such as fibrosis (scarring), necrosis (areas of dead tissue), phospholipidosis (disturbed fat metabolism), and damage to mitochondria (the centres of respiration in cells).

Further analyses needed

- Transcriptomics cannot predict disease or health states with absolute certainty, as not all changes in gene function result in the diseases suggested.
- Definitive proof has to be provided by additional molecular profiling which measures the organ's composition and is able to provide a direct indicator of health or disease status.
THIS IS UNDER WAY.

The shock finding

- The results from the transcriptomics analysis show that an ultra-low dose of Roundup thousands of times below regulatory permitted daily intake levels can be toxic when consumed on a long-term basis.
- Biomonitoring in humans suggest a body burden of glyphosate that is higher than that found to be toxic over the long term in these two studies.

The moral of the story

- The Séralini study provided valuable data with major implications for human health.
- Lobbyists and public relations operatives, including Monsanto-connected ones, tried to shut down a line of research that, if allowed to proceed, could prevent thousands or millions of diseases and deaths.
- Monsanto has endangered public health.