



Spreading Knowledge to Overcome Fear

Special article by Dr. Mark Poznansky, Ph.D., O. Ont., C.M
(www.savedbyscience.org)



It seems perfectly obvious that “we” need a strategy to combat the forces of “Anti-Science” and Misinformation. Much of that requires better education at all rungs of the scientific information ladder.

There is a group of really, smart, people at the Genetic Literacy Project (GLP) whose motto is “Science not Ideology” who are working hard at getting us to think this way. But overall, it’s clear that we are not winning the information battle and why should we even be engaged in such a fight?

Why have we allowed the anti-vaxxers to take the headlines such that large segments of the American and Canadian populations have questioned whether they would accept to be vaccinated against COVID19? Why have climate change deniers garnered so much press? Why are so many people refusing to see what is so clearly in front of their eyes in terms of global warming and its devastating impact on so many lives?

When the truth, based on overwhelming scientific evidence is that: vaccines are safe and help save tens of millions of lives each, and every year, and global warming and climate change is very clearly manmade – for that matter, it is a threat to all of us, to our health, to our economy and in the long term maybe even to our very existence.

And yet, daytime television shows and various networks are continuously promoting the notion that vaccines are dangerous, that the measles vaccine can result in autism in your child. Perhaps the biggest lie is that fossil fuels are an essential energy source – this is often delivered to us directly (and indirectly) by companies involved in the fossil fuel industry and by governments and financial institutions who are heavily invested in those companies. These groups claim that global warming and climate change are nowhere near as bad as some make them out to be and that they are not “manmade”. We don’t have to look very far (i.e. the wildfires in California, the massive flooding in Louisiana, the major inland flooding in India and the major draughts in China) to see just how serious climate change really is and just how false the claims of the climate change deniers are.



We might ask where the power of these conspiracy theories and theorists come from. Well, for starters, this is not an entirely new phenomenon. It has existed for as long as one group of people have sought to exert control or power over another.

In recent years, we can think about how Trump acceded to the American Presidency by spreading falsehoods and conspiracy theories against his opponents: first Republicans and then Democrats. And the list, of course, goes on.

Today, humanity faces some major existential threats with respect to our health, the security of our food supply and the condition of our environment. We can easily argue that if we are to survive, we can no longer afford to succumb to harmful conspiracy theories. We need the truth, the facts, in order to take necessary actions.

Thus, to counter conspiracy theories and falsehoods, we must pay much closer attention to the quote from the late American Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan: “You are entitled to your own Opinion, but you are not entitled to your own Facts.” The impacts of such falsehoods are enormous, reminding me of the statement by a former President of Harvard University, Derek Bok who in defense of his budget said: “If you think Education is expensive, try Ignorance”.

It seems to me that our collective lack of attention to these two quotes is now coming home to roost. Conspiracies based on falsehoods and simple misinformation have become rampant with negative impacts on us all. We must ask why we have not developed a comprehensive strategy to combat these trends.

We have to spread knowledge to overcome fear.

We do so by taking on more responsibility. We must take ownership, and not allow ourselves to be dominated by those who would do us harm. We must demand more of ourselves in understanding the facts and the issues we face. We must demand more of our teachers and our leadership and ensure that they steer clear of conspiracy theories and falsehoods. We must have a more trustworthy and knowledgeable media, more experts, intent on offering facts rather than biased opinions. ■

Dr. Mark Poznansky is an Associate at Spindle Strategy Corp.
For more about Mark, visit [www.spindlestrategy.org / team](http://www.spindlestrategy.org/team).