

David Healy's *Children of the Cure: Missing Data, Lost lives and Antidepressants*

### Carlos Hojaij's comment

*"At his best, man is the noblest of animals;  
separated from law and justice he is the worst."*

Aristotle (1977)

A circle of corruption. Who is in the center?

The book, *Children of the Cure* (2020), according to the authors, "offers either a fairy tale or an epic take (pay your money and make your own call)" on Study 329.

I don't know the "Study 329" story. David Healy's comments bring up black box warnings on antidepressants; a fraud charge and \$3 billion fine to a company; efforts to have published a manipulated paper; a "two opposite versions in premier journals"; a real saga ("the least known part of the story") to restore the article involving medical academics, ghost writers, several people from GSK, BMJ, NIH, the New York Attorney General and the American Academy for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

Healy goes on denouncing other pediatric depression trials running in India, Africa and US foster homes or correctional facilities, "but with Western 'authors' for African trials and academics from the most distinguished US centers in the case of trials recruiting from correctional facilities and foster homes and in both cases likely a higher proportion of non-existent patients."

For Healy, "there is barely a trial of medicines that can legitimately be described as science -if we are conforming to the norms of science that is."

I don't know the "Study 329" story.

But the world has plenty of "329" histories, which have been in the public domain for some time. Some more recent of them are:

1. On June 13, 2020 the German Minister of Health announced an agreement between the European Union and AstraZeneca guaranteeing an immediate and privileged supply of 300 million doses of **“a possible”** vaccine against the coronavirus, to be distributed as soon as the vaccine is discovered to all state members that want to participate (or want to pay for). The Minister estimates that the vaccine should be approved **“this year or next year.”** The main argument for the contract - other than a privilege for members of the European Union - is: the advance of payment would allow the company to invest in “production capacities” and a trial that usually takes several years, could be accomplished in 12 to 18 months. Of course, the amount paid to AstraZeneca is not disclosed. It is reported that the same pharmaceutical company signed similar contracts with Great Britain, US and India. (Le Figaro 2020a,b).
2. Who’s afraid of chloroquine? Several non-standardized studies due to the emergency of such a critical situation show efficacy for association chloroquine-azithromycin when administered during the first few days to persons presenting Covid-19 symptoms. Several countries like Portugal, Italy, Greece, Morocco, East of Europe countries, US, Brazil ordered huge amount of chloroquine and are doing a quick and inexpensive form of preventive medicine. However, around the world, and voiced by the WHO, there is an intense promotion in the media discrediting this early intervention with research developed in hospitalized patients, when the disease was already in advanced stage. France is an example of a furious dispute between the well-recognized Prof. Didier Raoult (Marseille) defending the early association and the medical establishment commanding and advising the government actions. A recent book authorized by Prof. Christian Perronne (2020), President of the French Federation of Infectology and Chief of Service of Infectious Diseases at the Garches Hospital, brings serious documented accusations implicating doctors, ministerial staff and the center of the government, all united to suffocate the very old malaria lady.

In parallel, most West European countries, Australia and part of US adopted a policy to force the individuals to look for medical assistance only when feeling unwell after various days, with the argument of not having enough health structure (material and personal) to face the initial pandemic, which allowed progression under closed eyes to a catastrophic situation. Rapidly, the heroic preventive medicine was scrapped from the map for despair of old people and a population living in precarious hygienic condition. One may say that while humans are exploring the unimaginable cosmos,

hundreds of thousands of lives are disposed to favor development of the pharmaceutical industry and its associates profit.

(Despite of not being entirely related to Study 329, it is interesting to note that the vaccine to be sold - if validated - by China, a country of 1.5 billion inhabitants and where all this world tragedy started, has been developing the third case of clinical trials in Indonesia, Turkey and Brazil, apparently protecting its own people from eventual “accidents”).

"Waiting for Godot" maybe is the play for 2020.

3. The scandal of false results in incontestable scientific journals is part of the popular comments in everyday life. Material was prepared by Vincent Bordenave for *Le Figaro* and published on June 13, 2020, under the title “The Lancet”, la reine des revues médicales, content for son opacité (“Les pratique de validation des articles cultivent un certain goût pour le secret” [“The Lancet”, the queen of medical reviews, contested for its lack of transparency. The article validation practice's cultivates a certain taste for secrets].

Once more, *The Lancet's* credibility was lost with the famous article about the COVID-19 denying chloroquine efficacy (2020a). An amazing and cynical response came latter (“Learning from a retraction” 2020b), after all damage, increasing fear worldwide and perniciously discrediting serious effective results involving the old malaria agent:

“The publication and subsequent retraction in June 2020 of the Article Hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine with or without a macrolide for treatment of COVID-19: a multinational registry analysis, based on an alleged dataset associated with Surgisphere, prompted us to examine *The Lancet's* peer-review processes to identify ways of further reducing risks of research and publication misconduct. As a result of this review, with immediate effect, we have made changes to the declarations we seek from authors, the data sharing statements we require for published research papers, and the peer-review process for similar papers based on large datasets or real-world data.”

After 200 years of existence, *The Lancet* confessed not have a reliable peer review process!

A scientific journal founded in England by Thomas Wakley, *The Lancet* threw in a rubbish bin its reputation and for now pretends to understand and opine in politics. Its May 9, 2020 editorial, “COVID-19 in Brazil: 'So what?'” was interesting call for a scientific journal. The thematic of the editorial is not really COVID-19, but the intention to bring more fire to a well-articulated media campaign against the democratic elected Brazilian President: "Brazil as a country must come together to give a clear answer to the 'So what?' by its President. He needs to drastically change course or must be the next to go.”

But *The Lancet* also has now a big (pinocchio) nose. The journal created the “Global Burden of Disease (GBD)” (a *The Lancet* web site), bringing together the most comprehensive data and analysis of worldwide trends in global health, published across *The Lancet* family of journals.” It is enough to read about the GBD to identify the totalitarian Lancet perspective:

“The GBD study offers a **powerful resource to understand the changing health challenges facing people across the world in the 21st century.** Led by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), the GBD study is **the most comprehensive worldwide observational epidemiological study to date. By tracking progress within and between countries** GBD provides an **important tool to inform clinicians, researchers, and policy makers,** promote accountability, and improve lives worldwide.”

4. It may be that *The Lancet's* derail came from Elsevier. This company is taking over most of the scientific journals around the world, one more totalitarian movement controlling what has to be scientifically approved and promoted. It is clearly moved by a scandal mercantilist posture. *Pour la Science*, on February 13, 2012, printed “The researchers' sling against *Elsevier*” in which it denounced the abusive charges imposed by this company for the researchers to have their papers published, a mercantilism denaturing science (Mashaal 2012).

Elsevier indeed exploits authors. In an excessive bureaucratic system, making difficult for an understanding, a kind of maze trap, Elsevier created the illusionary “**Open Access Journals**” - pay high and have your paper published and promoted:

"In 2002, the Budapest Open Access Initiative set out the potential benefits of unrestricted access to scholarly content: accelerate research, enrich education, share the learning of the rich with the poor and the poor with the rich, make this literature as useful as it can be, and **lay the foundation for uniting humanity in a common intellectual conversation and quest for knowledge.**"

Firstly, humanity means the whole of human beings, in itself humanity has unity. Secondly, publication of scientific matters does not have as a goal to lay the foundation for uniting humanity. Open publications, provided by authors, not by publishing houses, should aim at diffusion of knowledge under different stages of progression and a free debate between different opinions in relation to the same topic; it should be an exercise of confrontation allowing science and knowledge evolution. Publishing houses in reality are taking advantage of knowledge belonging to authors, charging them for having their research published and presenting themselves as saviors of humanity. It is the same cynicism and totalitarian position inflicted by *The Lancet*.

5. In search for easy glory: self-citation. Van Noorden and Chawla (2019) prepared an extensive report noting that a high number of authors promote themselves through self-citation:

“Vaidyanathan, a computer scientist at the Vel Tech R&D Institute of Technology, a privately run institute, is an extreme example: he has received 94% of his citations from himself or his co-authors up to 2017, according to a study in *PLoS Biology* this month (Van Noorden 2020). He is not alone. The data set, which lists around 100,000 researchers, shows that at least 250 scientists have amassed more than 50% of their citations from themselves or their co-authors, while the median self-citation rate is 12.7%.”

The *PLoS Biology* article also gives evidence of the so-called "citation farms": unified in groups, scientists massively cite each other. John Ioannidis, a physician at Stanford University in California who specializes in meta-science, thinks that self-citation farms are far more common. It is not uncommon for editors to promote their

journals by requesting that their articles be cited by other authors writing on related topics.

Self-citation and citation farms constitute one more ethical scandal in “scientific publications” and they have been there for years and years.

I could go on and on and on...

At the center of this world of ostentatiousness, grandiosity, manipulation, falsehood, bureaucracy, regulation, fear, control and coercion, monopoly, totalitarianism, corruption and impunity, where authority has been humiliated and annihilated lays the patient, impotent and lost.

Studies like 329 reveal a kind of black hole encompassing the entirety of contemporaneous society.

What a want of a fantastic army of strong, decent, honorable, fair, intelligent, persevering and courageous individuals!

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