



# *DAVID vs. GOLIATH: VOLUNTARY PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES AND THE INDUSTRIAL JUGGERNAUT*

**COLIN L. SOSKOLNE, PhD**

**PROFESSOR EMERITUS, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA, CANADA**

**ADJUNCT PROFESSOR, FACULTY OF HEALTH,  
UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA**

**CHAIR, INTERNATIONAL JOINT POLICY COMMITTEE OF THE SOCIETIES OF EPIDEMIOLOGY  
(IJPC-SE)**

[WWW.COLINSOSKOLNE.COM](http://WWW.COLINSOSKOLNE.COM) | [WWW.IJPC-SE.ORG](http://WWW.IJPC-SE.ORG)

**INSTITUTE OF OCCUPATIONAL MEDICINE AND INDUSTRIAL HYGIENE,  
NATIONAL TAIWAN UNIVERSITY  
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GLOBAL ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY GROUP (GEIG) INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
*"THE COMMON GOOD: THE ROLE OF INTEGRITY IN THE SUPPORT OF LIFE AND  
HUMAN SECURITY"*  
JUNE 29 - JULY 3, 2015  
PARMA, ITALY (TEXT IN PRESS, 2016)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

THANK YOU

Taiwan Ecological Stewardship Association

AT WHOSE KIND INVITATION I AM VISITING  
TAIWAN

- *Nancy Tzu-Mei Chen*
- *Yuping Chen*

# DISCLOSURE

***No financial conflict-of-interest is declared except to note that:***

- ***I strive for professional service in the public interest; AND***
- ***As a professional legacy, I have been bankrolling this voluntary professional society (the IJPC-SE) for the past four years in the hope that it will become self-sustaining and endure.***

SOME LESS RECENT AND MORE  
RECENT EXPOSÉS AKIN TO  
DAVID AND GOLIATH

OF RELEVANCE TO OUR TOPIC

AND THAT WE CANNOT DENY



# MY OWN EXPERIENCE AS A PHD STUDENT ... 1978-1982

**1977 – paper critiqued; visit ... interview**

**1978 – relocated – summer research**

**1979 – project approved; great opportunity!**

**1980 – commenced data collection**

**1981 – 1st draft of dissertation completed**

- **Finding of a positive relationship between long-term, high-level occupational exposure to sulfuric acid and the development of laryngeal cancer**

# EXPERIENCE, CONTINUED ...

1981 – A contextual change ...

Reagan replaces Carter as President of the USA

- *Female head replaced by male head*
- *Top-Down influence ... ?*

# EXPERIENCE, CONTINUED ...

## ***Male head's first task: attempts to destroy my doctorate***

- Required that I respond to his critiques, despite *a priori* hypothesis demonstrated:
- Approached supervisory committee (ambush)
- Required further analysis and data gathering taking 6 additional months of research (delays)

***Stopped the “harassment” only after the results progressively worsened each time further work produced more severe findings (RR grew from 4 to 13)!***

# EXPERIENCE, CONTINUED ...

- Attempted to make publication impossible
- Employed a reputable consulting firm to “kill” the finding
- Denied woman he replaced the right to co-authorship with her corporate affiliation
- A classical case of an **INDUSTRIAL APOLOGIST?**  
Became the “blue-eyed boy of the corporation”?



# EXPERIENCE, CONTINUED ...

He FAILED in that:

- **Awarded PhD**
- **Awarded Annual student prize from the Society for Epidemiologic Research in 1983**
- **Published in the American Journal of Epidemiology in 1984**
- **Replicated findings by NIOSH and myself and co-workers after relocating first to Toronto and then to Edmonton, Canada**
- **In 1992, IARC designated finding as a Group 1 carcinogen**

# **CONTEXT, AND THE RESEARCH QUALITIES EXHIBITED BY STUDENT ...**

**Enjoyed support of supervisory committee**

**Meticulous rigor in methods and conduct of research**

**Determination to complete the work**

**Tenacity – unwilling to “go away”**

**Resilience and follow-through**

# I FOUND AT THAT TIME ...

**No professional support - other than a personally supportive supervisory committee - that could help with the ethical dimensions of that to which I was being subjected ...**

# **I CAME TO REALIZE A YEAR LATER ...**

**The profession that I had just entered had no code of ethics (or, ethics guidelines) to which one could refer in a time of need ...**

**I brought this fact to the attention of the profession in 1984, and published it in 1985, my entry point to professional ethics writing in epidemiology**

# AND THIS LED TO

Soskolne CL. *Epidemiological research, interest groups, and the review process.* Journal of Public Health Policy, Vol. 6(2), June 1985, pp. 173-184

Soskolne CL. *Epidemiology: Questions of science, ethics, morality and law.* American Journal of Epidemiology, Vol. 129(1), January, 1989, pp. 1-18

Soskolne CL. *Ethical decision-making in epidemiology: The case study approach.* Journal of Clinical Epidemiology, Vol. 44, Suppl. I, 1991, pp. 125S-130S

# AND THEN ...

**Numerous meetings, lectures, symposia, workshops, society business meetings, papers, letters-to-the-editor, proceedings, books, nationally and internationally ...**

*And later,*

**The adoption of *Ethics Guidelines*, since 1999, by main and sub-specialty organizations of epidemiologists**

# THE 'FOUR D'S' - INSTITUTIONAL

Applied to scientists studying that which does not support the *status quo*:

**Deny**

**Delay**

**Divide**

**Discredit**

- [ **Dismiss** ] [ **Death – Meryl Streep in the movie Silkwood, 1983; Julia Roberts in Erin Brockovich, 2000** ]



# TOBACCO EXAMPLE IS BEST KNOWN

- **Full circle – ~50-year story now told**
- **Disinformation campaigns**
- **Lies, manipulation, deceit**
- **Co-option or appropriation of scientists to lie. Is this bad in itself?**
- ***The real tragedy is that scientists accept these monies and then proceed to please their sponsor. How and why will be addressed ...***





INTERVIEWS

# THE TEFLON TOXIN, DUPONT, AND THE CHEMISTRY OF DECEPTION

Sharon Lerner, August 17, 2015

*Teflon toxin case against DuPont (Part 1),*

<https://firstlook.org/theintercept/2015/08/17/teflon-toxin-case-against-dupont/>

*DuPont and the Chemistry of Deception (Part 2),*

<https://firstlook.org/theintercept/2015/08/11/dupont-chemistry-deception/>

*In Part 1, see reference to testimony of Douglas Weed:*

*The deposition of a DuPont expert named Douglas Weed suggests a possible line of attack: that Bartlett, who lives just a few miles downriver from the DuPont plant, developed the cancer because she's overweight. Or, perhaps, just by chance.*

*The role of luck — that two things often correlate just by chance — was a major point of Weed's testimony, for which DuPont paid the former employee of the National Cancer Institute more than \$100,000. During his deposition in March 2015, the doctor estimated that since leaving the government agency eight years ago he has made between \$5 million and \$6 million providing expert testimony to companies in such corporate defense cases.*

*Weed also testifies on the harmlessness of chrysotile asbestos.*

JUDGE MILES W. LORD, MINN, 1982

**ON CORPORATE ETHICS AND ENVIRONMENTAL  
POLLUTION:**

*“Corporations create 80% of our GNP. They, of all entities working, have the most potential for good or evil in our society.”*

**This was in 1982. Today it is surely more like 90%.**

# BENZENE AND WORKER CANCERS: 'AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY'

## Internal documents reveal industry 'pattern of behavior' on toxic chemicals

*A pattern of concealment from workers ...*

By David Heath and Jim Morris

<http://www.publicintegrity.org/2014/12/04/16330/internal-documents-reveal-industry-pattern-behavior-toxic-chemicals>



# CENTER FOR PUBLIC INTEGRITY

[WWW.PUBLICINTEGRITY.ORG](http://WWW.PUBLICINTEGRITY.ORG)

## • **Industry Muscle Targets Federal *Report on Carcinogens*, July 30, 2013**

*“Industry attacks on Public Health research have become more strident.”*

**Linda Birnbaum, Director, US-NIEHS**

# NUTRITION SCIENTISTS ON THE TAKE FROM BIG FOOD

A report and article on how supposedly independent, scientific organisations and publications concerned with public health have betrayed their mission and the public interest by allowing financial conflicts of interest to influence their work and their policies.

- Nutrition Scientists on the Take from Big Food. Has the American Society for Nutrition lost all credibility? Michele Simon, **June 2015** <http://www.eatdrinkpolitics.com/wp-content/uploads/ASNReportFinal.pdf>
- Is the Leading Nutrition Science Group in Big Food's Pocket? Mother Jones, Luke Whelan, **June 15, 2015**, <http://www.motherjones.com/blue-marble/2015/06/big-food-has-more-influence-nutritional-science-then-you-think>

Michele Simon is a public health lawyer specializing in legal strategies to counter corporate tactics that harm the public's health. She is with [www.eatdrinkpolitics.com](http://www.eatdrinkpolitics.com)

# "SUM OF US" ON MONSANTO

## JUNE 29, 2015 (1 OF 3)

Monsanto, one of the world's most evil corporations, just keeps getting worse. **Monsanto's latest victims? Poverty-stricken Indian farmers.**

In 2012, 13,754 farmers in India committed suicide. That's one suicide every 38 minutes.

**Why? Massive, crippling debts, made worse by exorbitant annual fees charged by Monsanto for seeds.**

There's no way poor Indian farmers can stand up to Monsanto alone. So we're launching a campaign to demand that Monsanto stop charging the crippling annual royalties causing so much suffering.

Monsanto's GMO crops were introduced in India in 2002, and since then there's been a sharp rise in the suicide rate among Indian farmers -- and it's not hard to see why.

For centuries, farmers made a living by saving seeds from one year's crop to the next.

**But today, Monsanto is claiming patent rights over seeds -- the fundamental source of all plant life -- and forcing farmers to pay for new seeds every single year.**

The result is a crippling cycle of poverty, from which farmers see no way out. 23



# ONE CURRENT EXAMPLE OF DAVID VS. GOLIATH (2 OF 3)

Mega-corporations like Monsanto act like they can destroy people's lives as long as they're improving shareholder returns. But **time and again we're showing these corporations that we will shine a light on the practices they want to hide in the shadows.**

Like when Newmont mining company sent a private security firm to intimidate Máxima Acuña Chaupe, thousands of us chipped in to bring her allies to Newmont's shareholder meeting where the CEO pledged to stop development of the mine.

As Vandana Shiva has said, **when corporations control seeds, they control life.** Monsanto is taking a renewable common resource and turning it into a non-renewable, patented commodity.

We know that Indian farmers can't fight Monsanto alone. That's why SumOfUs was created -- to leverage the global power of consumers from around the world to fight multinational corporations together.



# ONE CURRENT EXAMPLE OF DAVID (INDIANS) VS. GOLIATH (MONSANTO) (3 OF 3)

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# SOME RECENT DEVELOPMENTS TO TAME GOLIATH



**The Center for Public Integrity, Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health and The Graduate Center at the City University of New York** are making public some 20,000 pages of benzene documents – the inaugural collection in Exposed, a searchable on-line archive of previously secret oil and chemical industry memoranda, emails, letters, PowerPoints and meeting minutes that will grow over time.

# NEW GROUP AIMS TO REVEAL TRUTHS, PROTECT WHISTLEBLOWERS

Like WikiLeaks, but better:

<http://www.takepart.com/article/2014/06/04/whistleblowers>

***What separates a democracy from a dictatorship?***

Government transparency, among other things. The new organization's mission is to “shed light on concealed activities that are relevant to human rights, **corporate malfeasance, the environment**, civil liberties, and war” by calling on Americans to share “official information—whether governmental or corporate—that the public has a right to know.” The bottom line for **ExposeFacts** is in its tagline: ***Whistleblowers Welcome.***

# THE ROLE OF ANY PROFESSIONAL SOCIETY

***TO SERVE AS A TRANSPARENT VOICE FOR  
ADVANCING THE DISCIPLINE BY PROVIDING A  
FORUM TO***

- **Facilitate networking to maximize engagement at multiple levels and scales in the public interest**
- **Foster the development of uni-, multi- and trans-disciplinary research methods**
- **Incentivize personal and professional integrity in both research and practice by setting normative standards for ethics, peer over-site, and accountability**
- **Provide a public face**



# EPIDEMIOLOGY AS AN APPLIED SCIENCE

**Because it is possible to manipulate experimental and control groups in ways that introduce bias and thus fail to serve the public interest through the pursuit of truth (as expected of scientists), it is recognized that ethical training and oversight are crucial.**

**Our ethics and values determine in large part our behaviours.**

**“Industry’s offensive against the regulation of health and safety hazards uses academics to downplay or deny the seriousness of the hazards...”**

**Clayson and Halpern**  
**J. of Public Health Policy**  
**September, 1983**

# PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY / ETHICS / MORALITY / LAW:

- **The defining influences in our behaviour / conduct as people ... and as research scientists ... in the social context in which we live, work and play**



# BUT TEMPTATION LURKS



# HUMAN AND SYSTEM FRAILTIES

- **Junk science:** Our professional obligation to be vigilant and especially careful in peer review
- **Need for oversight (as in Human Research Ethics Boards/IRBs)**
- **The need to keep ourselves on track with ETHICS GUIDELINES and related activities**

HE WHO PAYS THE PIPER  
CALLS THE TUNE ...

A tension emerges between:

TEMPTATION TO ACCEPT LUCRATIVE  
AMOUNTS FOR SERVING SPECIAL  
INTERESTS

VS.

OBLIGATION AS EPIDEMIOLOGISTS  
TO PURSUE TRUTH IN THE PUBLIC  
INTEREST

# WE MUST NOT BE NAIVE

*Be aware of forces at play that influence both science and policy.*

*... Great vigilance and personal integrity are required to counter the influence of financially interested parties and corrupt / morally bankrupt governments.*

# SERIES OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALIST REPORTS ON CORRUPTION OF SCIENCE BY VESTED INTERESTS – “SCIENCE FOR SALE”

**Meet the 'rented white coats' who defend toxic chemicals**

**Vice Media produced a documentary, Why the Deadly Asbestos Industry Is Still Alive and Well on the Russian Uralasbest asbestos mine**

**About 'Science for Sale'. The danger of tainted science.**

**By Jim Morris, Center for Public Integrity, February 8, 2016**

**<http://www.publicintegrity.org/2016/02/08/19291/about-science-sale>**

***Science and opinion have become increasingly conflated, in large part because of corporate influence. Industry-backed research has exploded — often with the aim of obscuring the truth — as government-funded science dwindles.***



# SCIENCE FOR SALE

•Meet the ‘rented white coats’ who defend toxic chemicals. How corporate-funded research is corrupting America’s courts and regulatory agencies.

By David Heath. Center for Public Integrity, February 8, 2016

<http://www.publicintegrity.org/2016/02/08/19223/meet-rented-white-coats-who-defend-toxic-chemicals>

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•Making a cancer cluster disappear. After a record number of brain tumors at a chemical plant, industry launched a flawed study that obscured the extent of the problem.

By David Heath, Center for Public Integrity, February 10, 2016

<http://www.publicintegrity.org/2016/02/10/19265/making-cancer-cluster-disappear>

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•Ford spent \$40 million to reshape asbestos science.

Stung by lawsuits, the automaker hired consultants to change the narrative on the risks of asbestos brakes

By Jim Morris, Center for Public Integrity, February 16, 2016

<http://www.publicintegrity.org/2016/02/16/19297/ford-spent-40-million-reshape-asbestos-science>



# SCIENCE FOR SALE

**.Brokers of junk science? Two scientific journals known for their industry ties have become go-to publications for researchers who minimize risks from chemicals**

**By Jie Jenny Zou, Center for Public Integrity, February 18, 2016**

<http://www.publicintegrity.org/2016/02/18/19307/brokers-junk-science>

**.Why the Deadly Asbestos Industry Is Still Alive and Well**

***Vice Reports. February, 2016***

<http://www.vice.com/video/why-the-deadly-asbestos-industry-is-still-alive-and-well>

# RELENTLESS PRESSURE FROM VESTED INTERESTS

- Manoeuvre their way onto review panels, influence Boards of our professional associations, and infiltrate the literature with junk science
- Expert witness tensions arise between the plaintiff and defence sides of the argument in tort actions where the rubber hits the road concerning policy decisions
- David vs Goliath?
- Current major initiative of the IJPC-SE is its Working Group on *Conflict-of-Interest and Disclosure*  
[www.ijpc-se.org](http://www.ijpc-se.org)



# IJPC-SE BRIEF HISTORY

- Formed in Seattle in 2006 at the 2<sup>nd</sup> (5-yearly) North American Congress of Epidemiology
- It is now in its 9<sup>th</sup> year of operation
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Chair: **Roberta Ness** (2006 - 2007)
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Chair: **Susan Sacks** (2008 - 2009)
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Chair: **Stanley H. Weiss** (2010 - 2014)
  - 4<sup>th</sup> Chair: **Colin L. Soskolne** (2014 - 2016)
  - 5<sup>th</sup> Chair-Elect: **Wael Al-Delaimy** (2016 - ?)
- Website, Founding Bylaws, related policy documents, and Not-for-Profit status set in motion in 2012-2015
- A major initiative recently was the launch in 2012 of the IJPC-SE *Position Statement on Asbestos*

## IJPC-SE AND ITS MISSION:

- **Volunteer-driven, not-for-profit consortium, currently comprising 19 national and international member-professional societies/associations**
- **Impartially generate, report and apply epidemiological methods to the formulation, implementation and evaluation of evidence for use in informing health policy**

# IJPC-SE GOAL & APPROACH

- **Goal is to serve the public interest by informing health policy and related areas of endeavour through its work at the nexus of research and policy**
- **Coordinates inter-professional society activities that are related to research and practice in the generation of evidence, as well as in evidence-based policy application, formulation, implementation and evaluation**
- **Promotes epidemiological best practices to inform policy**

# ON THE IJPC-SE 2012 POSITION STATEMENT ON ASBESTOS

***“The IJPC Position Statement on Asbestos was an important act of collaboration and leadership by societies of epidemiology in calling for national and international policy to be based on the scientific evidence. While the asbestos industry spends millions of dollars on marketing and political lobbying, they are losing the battle of credibility, thanks to organizations such as the IJPC-SE speaking up to defend epidemiologic evidence and public health policy. More organizations have since joined the IJPC-SE, in part, I believe, because they see that the IJPC-SE is playing a positive and meaningful role in serving the public good.”***

**Kathleen Ruff, quoted in The Epidemiology Monitor, June 2015**

# IJPC-SE'S CURRENT INITIATIVE

**A current initiative of the IJPC-SE is to create a position statement on conflict-of-interest and disclosure.**

**The need to address conflict-of-interest and disclosure issues more forthrightly was brought about by high-profile failures of epidemiologists to fulfill norms and expectations in these areas.**

# CLASSICAL TECHNIQUES THAT SKEW RESULTS:

46

- Biased/selective interpretation
- Mechanistic information is ignored for inferring effects
- Exaggerated differences are made between human and toxicology studies, the insistence being on separating effects seen in animals from effects in humans
- The fact that molecular structures predict hazard potential is ignored

45



# TECHNIQUES THAT SKEW POLICY

- The insistence on first demonstrating effects in local populations of exposed people despite demonstrated effects in humans elsewhere
- The failure to make explicit the implicit value judgements that go into deciding appropriate standards of evidence for drawing policy-relevant conclusions (i.e., suppressing dominant interests and values)

**Cranor C. *Legally Poisoned: How the Law Puts Us at Risk from Toxicants* (Harvard University Press, 2011)**



# THE WAY FORWARD

**True democracy through a well-informed public, underscored by an improved government science, technology and innovation strategy that should:**

- Offer ***incentives*** to non-profit professional organizations in support of capacity-building to expose junk science, particularly where applied science works at the nexus of policy; and
- Introduce ***disincentives*** (i.e., regulatory penalties) for those engaging in producing junk science.



# DISCUSSION

[www.ijpc-se.org](http://www.ijpc-se.org)

[www.colinsoskolne.com](http://www.colinsoskolne.com)

