

## THE RISE AND FALL OF WIKIPEDIA: FIRST IN SEARCHES, LAST IN RELIABILITY

by Howard Straus

Anyone who uses the Internet to search for information is very likely to be familiar with the Wikipedia site. Wikipedia is very often among the first results that pop up on queries like "What is the population of Kazakhstan?" or "How many French speakers are there in the United States?" To questions like this, with little or no commercial impact and no scientific or political controversy surrounding them, Wikipedia sometimes offers decent answers.

But venture into natural healing or alternative medicine and the answers become totally skewed in favour of corporate medicine. Naturally, Big Pharma is one of those entities willing to pay to control the flow of information. Those pages are not identified as being advertising or propaganda.

This phenomenon is not limited to health topics. One of the "pay for play" controversies is covered in "Corruption in Wikiland?"<sup>1</sup> and in "Integrity of Wikipedia corporate articles corrupted by editing scandal".<sup>2</sup>

Wikipedia's credibility among serious researchers has always been

very low. It is hardly surprising that college professors across the board disallow citations from Wikipedia in students' papers.

Years ago, the *New York Times* reported that Middlebury College history department had banned Wikipedia references<sup>3</sup>, and a growing list of articles about schools and colleges banning Wikipedia for unreliability can actually be found at Wikipedia!<sup>4</sup>

Isn't it ironic that this entry is found at Wikipedia—and ironic that information about orthomolecular physician Robert F. Cathcart, MD,<sup>5</sup> and many other nutritional physicians<sup>6</sup> has been deleted?

This writer and many others in the field of alternative medicine and natural healing have experienced Wikipedia bias personally when contributing well-documented, carefully researched articles to the site, only to have them be radically altered and deleted by anonymous "editors", then being banned from further editing or contributions. This is impossible to reconcile with a free flow of information.

This can be verified. At Wikipedia, all past history of page edits is saved. Edits can be viewed by clicking on a tab on the page in question called "View History", right near the top of the page. It also shows the name of the person

making the edit and if he/she was logged in. Each page has its own history attached to it and can be viewed.

It did not take long for corporate America to wake up to the fact that the Internet was a powerful and democratic source of information and large numbers of people were using it to research questions that were not addressed by the advertising-funded mainstream media. As people turned more and more to the Internet for this information, Wikipedia grew like wildfire.

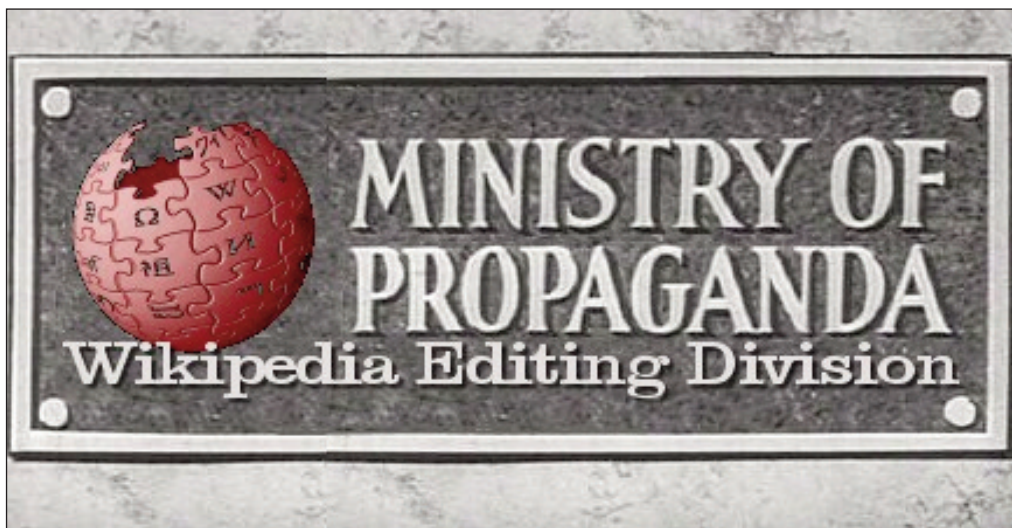
At first, it was interesting to see uncensored information flow through the site and even contribute to it. Then corporate America realised that Wikipedia and similar sites were distributing information that it had carefully and thoroughly suppressed in the media and set about correcting that omission.

Soon, Wikipedia entries about natural healing, holistic medicine and other subjects began to resemble publicity blurbs from Monsanto or Merck or the National Institutes of Health.

Contributors are supposed to be anonymous; "volunteer" editors are supposed to be both anonymous and neutral. But it was clear that for certain sensitive subjects, this was far from the case.

Additions to articles at Wikipedia that went against the corporate line were swiftly edited out and replaced by corporate-friendly advertising blurbs. Writers who posted the offending material were banned by the ostensibly neutral and unbiased editors, and the information reverted to the bad old days of censorship.

Wikipedia's co-founder Jimmy Wales ridiculed a petition by 8,000 people to



have a more robust discussion of alternative medicine, saying in part:

"No, you have to be kidding me. Every single person who signed this petition needs to go back to check their premises and think harder about what it means to be honest, factual, truthful..."

"What we won't do is pretend that the work of lunatic charlatans is the equivalent of 'true scientific discourse'. It isn't."

See "Wikipedia's Jimmy Wales Slams 'Lunatic' Petition For Holistic Medicine"<sup>7</sup>

Other articles on unethical use of Wikipedia and suppression of reportage include "Wikipedia's dark side: Censorship, revenge editing & bribes a significant issue"<sup>8</sup> and "Total hypocrisy: Wikipedia sues NSA while censoring truth and promoting corporate propaganda".<sup>9</sup>

Have a look at Wikipedia's page on chemotherapy.<sup>10</sup> Note that it minimises negative results; it never mentions the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center's study which found that chemotherapy makes cancer much worse; it doesn't go into the negative effects until far down in the article; and nowhere does it mention the word "safety", and "effectiveness" is almost glossed over. It does, however, list the revenues from the top 10 chemotherapeutic agents in 2013: they total US\$37.47 billion. That is just in one year.

On Wikipedia's page on Lipitor<sup>11</sup>, one of the main statin drugs, there is no mention of improved survival (of course, there is *no increase* in survival); the word "effectiveness" does not appear; and the word "efficacy" refers only to the drug's cholesterol-lowering property. There's nothing on increased longevity, and liver damage is mentioned lightly. However, "more than \$125 billion in sales over approximately 14.5 years" is noted. This made it the best-selling drug ever in the USA, with no long-term survival improvement

shown. Why is this not mentioned?

Wikipedia has frequently appealed for funding from its readers. Due to its increasing uselessness as a reliable information source, I believe the major contributors are sure to be the corporations that corrupted the information flow in the first place.

After my experiences with the site, and those of other contributors with information about controversial subjects, I would never use it as a resource for any but the most mundane queries. And I'd be suspicious even of those results.

(Howard Straus, grandson of Max Gerson, MD, is the doctor's principal biographer and author of *Dr Max Gerson: Healing the Hopeless*.)

## Endnotes

1. <http://tinyurl.com/zszzvt7>
2. <http://tinyurl.com/z7bvoag>
3. <http://tinyurl.com/hpncyhm>
4. <http://tinyurl.com/hr2rvdw>
5. <http://tinyurl.com/h3jolxy>
6. <http://tinyurl.com/zo7tb5n>
7. <http://tinyurl.com/zsfexkm>
8. <http://tinyurl.com/hrbs6p3>
9. <http://tinyurl.com/zqyrwev>
10. <http://tinyurl.com/pkfsb6l>
11. <http://tinyurl.com/jsley2w>

(Source: *Orthomolecular.org*, 8 February 2016, <http://tinyurl.com/zbnzf7p>)

## WIKIPEDIA FACT CHECK

According to Anonymous HQ:

- Wikipedia openly despises natural medicine and healing, and its pages on GMOs, vaccines, chemotherapy, pharmaceuticals, etc. are edited by corporate-paid trolls, not by anonymous volunteer editors as claimed.

- Co-founder Jimmy Wales sold soft-core pornography online before the 2001 launch of Wikipedia. In 1996, Wales launched a search engine called Bomis; a big part of it was the "Bomis Babe Report", dedicated to half-naked women.

- Larry Sanger, co-founder of Wikipedia, told the FBI that Wikimedia Commons (the parent company of Wiki products including Wikipedia, Wiktionary, Wikinews and Wikiquote) is rife with renderings of children performing sexual acts.

- Jeff Merkey, a former Novell chief scientist, accused Jimmy Wales of extortion. He stated that Wales had agreed to place him under his "special protection" as an editor in exchange for a substantial donation and other financial support for Wikimedia Foundation projects.

- Hillary Clinton's Wikipedia entry is kept free of controversy.

(Source: *Anonymous HQ*, 13 September 2015, <http://tinyurl.com/pyenhq7>)



# THE TRUTHS AND LIES OF WIKIWORLD

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decided database  
that has been open  
to abuse, but the  
advent of  
WikiScanner has  
uncovered a web of  
deceit and  
disinformation.*

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Since its creation in 2001, Wikipedia has grown as the online phenomenon that apparently allows the truth to be managed democratically; but over the past year it has also been exposed as a real-life "Ministry of Truth". Worse: people have been arrested and terrorised due to incorrect information being posted on this free Internet encyclopaedia.

## Wikipedia watching

On 15 December 2005, various media sources reported that the open-access encyclopaedia Wikipedia was about as accurate as the online *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, at least for science-based articles. This was the result of a study by the journal *Nature*, which chose scientific articles from both encyclopaedias across a wide range of topics and sent them for peer review. The reviewers found just eight serious errors. Of those, four came from each site. They also found a series of factual errors, omissions or misleading statements. All told, there were 123 such problems with *Britannica* and 162 with Wikipedia. That in itself is a staggering conclusion, which translates as averaging out to 2.92 mistakes per article for *Britannica* and 3.86 for Wikipedia, or three versus four mistakes. That, of course, is not "as accurate" as the newspapers reported—thus showing misleading statements in the newspapers' headlines.

Still, is Wikipedia's score proof positive that the Internet is indeed more than just a bundle of conspiracy theory and pornography sites, and that the combined efforts of Internet users actually work to create a knowledge base? Perhaps. Wikipedia allows anyone—*anyone*—to go in and add, change or delete anything in the encyclopaedia. Wikipedia is therefore an exercise in trust: it hopes that its users come there with the best of intentions.

The site is funded through the non-profit Wikimedia Foundation and in 2006 had an estimated budget of "about a million dollars". It was founded by Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger, the latter who left his co-creation behind in 2002 and stated in October 2006 that he was going to start a competitor that would allow for more peer-reviewed entries.

Trust cannot be guaranteed and hence, at best, Wikipedia comes with a few blemishes. George W. Bush's biography was so frequently changed—often to include name calling and "personalised opinions" on his policies—that his and a small number of other entries had to be locked and thus only authorised users were allowed to edit them. Innocent enough; perhaps even funny.

But a more suspicious case occurred in late 2005 when, for four months, Wikipedia included an anonymously written article linking former journalist John Seigenthaler to the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Robert F. Kennedy. His Wikipedia entry stated: "For a brief time, he was thought to have been directly involved in the Kennedy assassinations of both John and his brother Bobby. Nothing was ever proven." And: "John Seigenthaler moved to the Soviet Union in 1971, and returned to the United States in 1984. He started one of the country's largest public relations firms shortly thereafter." None of this was true, or even alleged, outside of WikiWorld. Seigenthaler thought that at the age of 78 he was beyond surprise or hurt, but he had obviously not counted on Wikipedia.

Worse, his case exposed a further flaw, as Wikipedia's information feeds automatically into Reference.com and Answers.com, whose computers are programmed to copy data verbatim from Wikipedia without any checks, thus spreading the lies further onto other sites. In this instance, "trust" failed and perhaps we should not blame Wikipedia directly.

But the ominous sign here was that Wikipedia was slow to react. Seigenthaler noticed that his "biography" was altered on 26 May 2005. On 29 May, one of the site's moderators edited it only by correcting the misspelling of the word "early" but did not check the other, much more serious, alterations. For four months, Wikipedia depicted him as a suspected assassin before this mention was erased from the website's history on 5 October—but it remained on Answers.com and Reference.com for three more weeks.

Daniel Brandt, a San Antonio-based activist who started the anti-Wikipedia site Wikipedia Watch (<http://www.wikipedia-watch.org>) in response to problems he had with his eponymous article, looked up the IP address in Seigenthaler's article and found that it related to Rush Delivery, a company in Nashville. On 9 December 2005, its employee Brian Chase admitted that he had placed the false information in Seigenthaler's Wikipedia biography.

End of story, it seemed, with the lesson learned that Wikipedia could be an excellent tool to spread disinformation—a lesson few people realised at the time. And though Wikipedia should have reacted, it didn't.

Though Seigenthaler's case received much notoriety, his was definitely not the only case. By December 2006, Brandt had listed several instances of erroneous entries as well as massive amounts of entries literally copied from copyright-protected material.

### Faking it

It was in early 2007 that the WikiWorld was rocked when one of its most prolific contributors and editors, "believed" by the site to be a professor of religion with advanced degrees in theology and canon law, was exposed as being nothing more than a community college drop-out.

The person at the centre of this controversy was "Essay"—which begged the question as to why anyone in a position of authority should want or need to hide behind a pseudonym. In truth, Essay was Ryan Jordan, a 24-year-old from Kentucky with no advanced degrees, who used texts such as *Catholicism for Dummies* to help him correct articles on the penitential rite and transubstantiation.

Indeed, the problem began at the very beginning of Essay's career, when no one vetted his credentials and when his claim to be a tenured professor of religion at a private university was accepted. He contributed to an estimated 20,000 Wikipedia entries, making up one per cent of the 1,675,000 articles that Wikipedia listed as being online.

Worse, however, was that Wikipedia staff recruited Essay to work on the site's Arbitration Committee, which he chaired for two terms, thus granting him almost divine powers without anyone asking him any questions. Fortunately Essay was only a pretender, not a person intent on spreading disinformation...but he could have accomplished this easily. He was an important player in WikiWorld. *The New Yorker*, in its 31 July 2006 edition, ran an article on Essay and his activities, which were then believed to be genuine.

By mid-January 2007, Essay had posted his real name and

employment history on the related Wikia website. However, it was Daniel Brandt who noticed this and made further enquiries. He eventually contacted *The New Yorker* to say that Essay's original biographical information was fake.

On 26 February, *The New Yorker* made an online correction, stating that Essay "holds no advanced degrees" and "has never taught". But worst of all was probably this comment: "At the time of publication, neither we nor Wikipedia knew Essay's real name."

Following the revelation, Wikipedia's co-founder Jimmy Wales asked Essay to resign (in any business environment he would have been fired), stating that "Wikipedia is built on (among other things) twin pillars of trust and tolerance". It was clear that one pillar had now totally collapsed. But bizarrely, Wales further commented: "It is not good, obviously, but the interesting thing is that Mr Jordan was an excellent editor, credentials or not. His work was extremely positive for Wikipedia."

We wonder how...

The Wikipedia entry on the debacle at the time read: "As a result of the controversy, Wikipedia users began a review of Essay's previous edits and discovered evidence he had relied upon his fictional professorship to influence editorial consideration of edits he made. 'People have gone through his edits and found places where he was basically cashing in on his fake credentials to bolster his arguments,' said Michael Snow, a

Wikipedia administrator and founder of the Wikipedia community newspaper, *The Wikipedia Signpost*. 'Those will get looked at again.'"

The site continued: "In reaction to the incident, Wales was reportedly considering a vetting process for all persons who adjudicate on factual disputes. Additionally, Wales said the site would soon develop a way to check credentials of Wikipedia editors who claim to possess them. 'I don't think this incident exposes any inherent weakness in Wikipedia, but it does expose a weakness that we will be

working to address,' Wales added."

Wales may of course change his opinion, but originally he said he was not concerned with Essay's invented persona: "I regard it as a pseudonym and I don't really have a problem with it." After an outcry from Wikipedia users, Wales changed his view.

Larry Sanger, in his *Citizendium* Blog of 1 March, responded to Wales's initial statement, stating: "There's something utterly breathtaking, and ultimately tragic, about Jimmy telling *The New Yorker* that he *doesn't have a problem* with Essay's lies, and by essentially *honoring* Essay after his lies were exposed... Doesn't Jimmy know that this has the potential to be even more damaging to Wikipedia than the Seigenthaler situation, since it reflects *directly* on the judgment and values of the *management* of Wikipedia?"

Wales meanwhile maintained that the service and its community are built around a self-policing and "self-cleaning" nature that is supposed to ensure its articles are accurate: the "Wikipedia Police". But are they the "Thought Police" or people who verify facts? Seigenthaler's entry suggests they are definitely not the latter.

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## "Wikipedia Police"

Disgruntled people at odds with Wikipedia are numerous. The "pseudophysicist" (to quote Wikipedia) Jack Sarfatti considers himself to be a victim of the service and even considered litigation at one point. He found that certain libellous information had been posted about him. Of course, he, like anyone else, can go in and alter that information, which is what he tried to do. He tried posting at various times of the day, but each time, within minutes, the changes were undone—suggesting that the Wikipedia moderators were constantly monitoring certain pages. When he dug further, he came to the conclusion that Wikipedia seemed to be in the hands of a group of sceptical minds, intent on making sure there were no mysteries and no conspiracies.

Indeed, when you consult a variety of subjects on Wikipedia, you will notice a certain "mindset" that excludes certain opinions. Just two examples...

Paul Smith is an ardent sceptic of the Rennes-le-Château and Priory of Sion mysteries (which are at the core of Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*) and is responsible for most of the Wikipedia entries on the subject. Some of these entries are blatantly biased and others contain serious factual errors. In both instances, I adjusted the wording and removed the errors. At no point did this mean that the Priory was depicted as genuine—far from it. In fact, I felt that an error-free posting would actually bring enhanced value to the entry. In this case, the entries remained up for a number of months, but then were returned to their negative, erroneous entries. The "Wikipedia Police" should have seen that the new entry was less neutral and more biased than what was on there, but they did not revert to the previous version. The question is: why prefer erroneous information over more neutral wordings? No wonder that experts find numerous errors in every article on Wikipedia...when Wikipedia seems to prefer to promote errors over factual statements.

I also tried to add further information about dissenting theories on the *Corpus Hermeticum*, specifically the work of Leiden University professor Bruno Stricker, giving due reference to his name and publications (including his PhD thesis). In this instance, Wikipedia moderators removed the section themselves, stating that I needed to give "more sources"—though I had actually given more sources than most of the other statements that maintain the status quo in this entry, namely that the *Corpus* is a second- or third-century AD creation rather than a third-century BC codification, as Stricker (and others) argue.

Examples of such unprofessional editing, with a bias towards maintaining the status quo and specifically downplaying if not removing controversial information, run into the hundreds if not thousands. Paul Joseph Watson of Prison Planet (<http://www.prisonplanet.com>) has noted there is a concerted campaign to erase the 9/11 Truth Movement. Furthermore, pages which they and like-minded individuals created, such as "List of Republican sex scandals", "People questioning the 9/11 Commission Report" and "Movement to impeach

George W. Bush" were all deleted. The first-mentioned page might indeed not be seen as important in an encyclopaedic environment, but the "wiki" (a page in the encyclopaedia) for Dylan Avery, the producer of the most-watched documentary film in Internet history, clearly merits a biographical page on an online encyclopaedia. Wikipedia, however, thought otherwise.

These are just some of the examples that people have experienced with the "service". At best, it is clear that the moderators have never been trained or validated for their

credentials. But Sarfatti has also drawn attention to the so-called "Wikipedia arbitration", which Wales has seen as the "self-cleaning" and the *deus ex machina* designed to re-establish Wikipedia's credibility—even though he elected a college drop-out to preside over it.

Upset about his own case and unable to rectify the situation, Sarfatti commented on a private email list: "They have set up a Virtual Shadow Government in which they now have their own courts to adjudicate 'litigation'." He made the point that the theory is that

whoever controls the Web controls the Earth—and there is indeed that potential. Perform a Google websearch and if Wikipedia has a result on what you search for, the Wikipedia entry will come up on top. So whatever you want to know, you will probably Google it and find it in Wikipedia. "Googlepedia" thus has a virtual monopoly on information and does indeed, as Sarfatti said, control the Web—and knowledge.

Googlepedia offers a one-stop shop for teachers and anyone else who wants to find information. Teachers have stated that this is exactly the case. What is in Wikipedia—and the opinions expressed therein—is almost directly passed on to students. It begs the question as to why there is still a need for teachers, as students are equally able to do a websearch...

**...he came to the conclusion that Wikipedia seemed to be in the hands of a group of sceptical minds, intent on making sure there were no mysteries and no conspiracies.**



*"Just conducting a routine Random Carbon-Footprint Test.  
Could I see your last 12 months' utility bills, please?"*



And students are more likely to check other hits, perhaps being more realistic about the expectations of Wikipedia—which for many teachers seems to have become gospel.

### When lies cause detention

So far, only a few egos seem to have been bruised. But Robert Fisk, in the British newspaper *The Independent*, reported on 21 April 2007 on the experience of Taner Akçam, a Turkish historian and writer. Akçam faces prosecution in Turkey for writing about the Armenian genocide. However, due to the vandalising of Akçam's Wikipedia entry, which accused him of being a member of a terrorist group, he was detained by Canadian border police on 17 February 2007. This is acknowledged in the Wikipedia entry, which can now only be edited by registered users—though anyone can still register for free, and registration only leaves some trace of who made the entry, nothing more.

Taner Akçam wrote to Fisk, stating: "Additional to the criminal investigation (law 301) in Turkey, there is a hate campaign going on here in the USA, as a result of which I cannot travel internationally any more... My recent detention at the Montreal airport—apparently on the basis of anonymous insertions in my Wikipedia biography—signals a disturbing new phase in a Turkish campaign of intimidation that has intensified since the November 2006 publication of my book."

Fisk continued: "Akçam was released, but his reflections on this very disturbing incident are worth recording. 'It was unlikely, to say the least, that a Canadian immigration officer found out that I was coming to Montreal, took the sole initiative to research my identity on the internet, discovered the archived version of my Wikipedia biography, printed it out on 16 February, and showed it to me—*voilà!*—as a result.'

"But this was not the end. Prior to his Canadian visit, two Turkish-American websites had been hinting that Akçam's 'terrorist activities' should be of interest to American immigration authorities.

And sure enough, Akçam was detained yet again—for another hour—by US Homeland Security officers at Montreal airport before boarding his flight at Montreal for Minnesota two days later.

"On this occasion, he says that the American officer—US Homeland Security operates at the Canadian airport—gave him a warning: 'Mr Akçam, if you don't retain an attorney and correct this issue, every entry and exit from the country is going to be problematic. We recommend that you do not travel in the meantime and that you try to get this information removed from your customs dossier.'

"So let's get this clear," Fisk continued. "US and Canadian officials now appear to be detaining the innocent on the grounds of hate postings on the internet. And it is the innocent—guilty until proved otherwise, I suppose—who must now pay lawyers to protect them from Homeland Security and the internet. But as Akçam says, there is nothing he can do," he concluded.

As the platform on which this false propaganda was offered, Wikipedia should accept part of the blame.

### WikiScanning revelations

This has underlined some serious problems with the second pillar of WikiWorld: tolerance. But what about Sarfatti's Orwellian claims that Wikipedia is the Ministry of Truth—i.e., Lies? On 14 August 2007, *Wired* reported that CalTech computation and neural-systems graduate student Virgil Griffith had created the "Wikipedia Scanner", which "offers users a searchable database that ties millions of anonymous Wikipedia edits to organizations where those edits apparently originated, by cross-referencing the edits with data on who owns the associated block of Internet IP addresses".

"I came up with the idea when I heard about Congressmen getting caught for white-washing their Wikipedia pages," he says on his website (<http://virgil.gr/31.html>). Griffith became very intrigued when, on 17 November 2005, an anonymous Wikipedia user deleted 15 paragraphs from an article on e-voting machine vendor Diebold, excising an entire section critical of the company's machines. Griffith traced those changes to an IP address reserved for the corporate offices of Diebold itself.

*Wired* concluded that when the new data-mining service was launched, it traced millions of Wikipedia entries to their sources, and for the first time put "comprehensive data behind longstanding suspicions of manipulation, which until now have surfaced only piecemeal in investigations of specific allegations". In short, Griffith proved Sarfatti and others' conspiracy theory.

Griffith has compiled lists of different corporations and government branches that have abused the "trust" of Wikipedia essentially to edit the truth out of existence, replacing it with a PR-friendly façade favourable not to the facts or any sense of neutrality but only to the interests of the parties concerned. The WikiScanner page (see <http://wikiscanner.virgil.gr>) lists a few "favourites" which include the CIA, the Vatican and the Church of Scientology.

You might expect that the CIA would make the biggest use of this tool, to spread propaganda, but such thinking

would be too primitive: a multibillion-dollar agency that has existed for 60 years has better and less traceable methodologies at its disposal. Still, rather interesting and somewhat humorous is that, on the profile of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a worker on the CIA network added the exclamation "Wahhhhhh!" before a section on the leader's plans for his presidency. A warning on the profile of the anonymous editor read: "You have recently vandalised a Wikipedia article, and you are now being asked to stop this type of behaviour." It seems that one CIA worker also tweaked the profile of Oprah Winfrey—an edit which hopefully occurred during a lunch break.

More interestingly, WikiScanner uncovered that the Vatican edited entries about Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams. The edit removed links to newspaper stories written in 2006 that alleged that Mr Adams's fingerprints and handprints had been found on a car used in 1971 in connection with a double murder. The Vatican spokesman, Jesuit father Federico Lombardi, clarified on Vatican Radio on 17 August 2007 that accusations saying that the

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Holy See manipulated the encyclopaedia intentionally "...lack all seriousness and logic. It is absurd even to think that such an initiative could have even been considered." Forced to explain how it could have happened, he said that there are many computers in the Vatican and that anyone could have access to Wikipedia on any one of them.

Equally interesting is that a computer traced to American Airlines (AA) was used to make a significant change about 9/11. The original entry read: "Two American Airlines aircraft were hijacked and crashed during the September 11, 2001 Terrorist Attack: American Airlines Flight 77 (a Boeing 757) and American Airlines Flight 11 (a Boeing 767)"—to which an AA employee added (somewhat ungrammatically): "Although these flights were daily departures before and a month after September 11, 2001. Neither flight 11 nor 77 were scheduled on September 11, 2001. The records kept by the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (<http://www.bts.gov/gis/>) do not list either flight that day." (See [http://www.prisonplanet.com/articles/august2007/260807\\_b\\_airlines.htm](http://www.prisonplanet.com/articles/august2007/260807_b_airlines.htm).) What are we to make of this?

But WikiScanner especially revealed that most abuse originates from corporate clients—and politicians. According to the UK *Independent* of 18 August 2007, Wal-Mart cleaned some statements about its employment procedures, and again, in October 2005, a person using a Diebold computer removed paragraphs about Walden O'Dell, chief executive of the company, which revealed that he had been "a top fund-raiser" for George W. Bush. Such cleaning should be seen as rewriting history. Even if the edits are not correct, Wikipedia's policy should be to insert "it is alleged" or statements to that effect.

The *Independent*, along with many media sources, mentioned other abuses. Griffith's tool also discovered that a computer owned by the US Democratic Party was used to make changes to the site of right-wing talk-show host Rush Limbaugh. The changes brand Mr Limbaugh as "idiotic", a "racist" and a "bigot". An entry about his audience read: "Most of them are legally retarded."

An IP address that belongs to the oil giant ExxonMobil was linked to sweeping changes to an entry on the disastrous 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill. An allegation that the company "has not yet paid the US\$5 billion in spill damages it owes to the 32,000 Alaskan fishermen" was replaced with references to the funds that the company has paid out.

The Republican Party edited Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party entry so it made it clear that the US-led invasion was not a "US-led occupation" but a "US-led liberation"—the clearest example of Ministry of Truth's approved Newspeak if ever there was one.

Also uncovered by WikiScanner was that a computer registered to the Dow Chemical Company deleted a section on the 1984 Bhopal chemical disaster (which ultimately killed up to 22,000 people) which occurred at a plant operated by Union Carbide, now a wholly owned subsidiary of Dow.

It was also reported that Barbara Alton, assistant to Episcopal bishop Charles Bennison, deleted information on a cover-up of child sexual abuse, allegations that the bishop misappropriated US\$11.6 million in trust funds, and evidence of other scandals. When challenged, Alton claimed that she had been ordered to delete the information by Presiding Bishop Katherine Jefferts Schori.

WikiScanner also uncovered that staff in Australia's Department

of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PMC) had edited entries on topics such as the "children overboard" affair, as reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 24 August. PM John Howard stated that he had not asked any of his staff to edit those entries. WikiScanner revealed, too, that Department of Defence staff had made more than 5,000 changes to the encyclopaedia, but the *Herald* reported that they were now blocked from editing entries (note that a general IP number can be used by several departments). Commenting on ABC News, the chair of Electronic Frontiers Australia, Dale Clapperton, said: "You also have to ask yourself whether it's a responsible and reasonable use of taxpayer dollars to have public servants trying to sanitise entries on Wikipedia using taxpayer-paid resources to make their point of view more acceptable to the current government." In a follow-up *Herald* report of 30 August, the PMC secretary claimed that the IP number did not belong to the department but instead to Macquarie Telecom—a claim that experts and the *Herald* dispute as highly unlikely, stating they have more evidence than merely an IP address to identify the government department as the source.

### Disinformation weapon

Just before WikiScanner grabbed the headlines in mid-August 2007, there was one Wikipedia incident which received far less attention than it deserved: it revealed that the intelligence agencies had been using Wikipedia for disinformation purposes, thus proving Sarfatti's Orwellian allegation.

Daniel Brandt posted a summary on The Wikipedia Review website on 1 August. The incident involved Pierre Salinger. He was a White House press secretary to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, served as a US senator from California in 1964 and was campaign manager for Robert Kennedy. Salinger was also a famous investigative journalist who broke many important news stories. When he was based in London, he investigated the December 1988 bombing of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, which killed 270 people. He and his collaborator, John K. Cooley, hired Linda Mack, a young graduate, to help in their research, which resulted in Salinger testifying at the Camp Zeist trial in November 2000:

"I know that these two Libyans had nothing to do with it. I know who did it and I know exactly why it was done," he said. Thinking the judge would allow him to present this evidence, Salinger queried: "That's all? You're not letting me tell the truth. Wait a minute; I know exactly who did it. I know how it was done," Salinger replied to the trial judge, Lord Sutherland, who simply asked him to leave the witness box. "If you wish to make a point you may do so elsewhere, but I'm afraid you may not do so in this court," Lord Sutherland interrupted.

So what does this have to do with Wikipedia? "SlimVirgin" had been voted the most abusive administrator of Wikipedia. She had upset so many editors that some of them decided to team up to research her real-life identity. Attempts to track her through Internet technology failed. This was suspicious in itself, as WikiScanner has revealed. According to a team member, SlimVirgin "knows her way around the Internet and covered her tracks with care". The question, therefore, was: why?

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**WikiScanner especially revealed that most abuse originates from corporate clients—and politicians.**

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Daniel Brandt patiently assembled tiny clues about SlimVirgin and posted them on his website. Eventually, two readers identified her as none other than Linda Mack, the young graduate whom Salinger had hired. To see her name appear in such a context was of course of great interest. But that was not all.

Cooley, Salinger's collaborator in the Lockerbie investigation, sent a letter to Brandt which was posted on The Wikipedia Review on 4 October 2006. He wrote how Mack "...claimed to have lost a friend/lover on Pan103 and so was anxious to clear up the mystery. ABC News paid for her travel and expenses as well as a salary... Once the two Libyan suspects were indicted, she seemed to try to point the investigation in the direction of [Libyan President Colonel Muammar al-] Qaddafi, although there was plenty of evidence, both before and after the trials of Megrahi and Fhimah in the Netherlands, that others were involved, probably with Iran the commissioning power... Salinger came to believe that Linda was working for MI5 and had been from the beginning; assigned

genuinely to investigate the bombing of Pan Am 103, but also to infiltrate and monitor us..."

Soon after John Cooley contacted Brandt, Linda Mack contacted Cooley and asked him not to help Brandt in his efforts to expose her. Though all doubts about SlimVirgin's true identity then vanished, as for her motives...

### Inconvenient truths

So, welcome to WikiWorld, a realm where inconvenient truths can easily be removed, while erroneous information—convenient lies and diinformation—can be entered in the encyclopaedia with emotionally upsetting and even worse consequences for the people involved.

This is the modern Ministry of Truth which, together with the liars and no doubt some mentally unstable people, has been put in charge of rewriting history. It labels itself as the "Free Encyclopaedia", but perhaps the world should be freed from this encyclopaedia before the old proverb is converted thus: "There are lies, damned lies, statistics, and then there's Wikipedia."

The problem with Wikipedia is not that it exists, but that it has become the cornerstone

for researchers scanning the Internet for information and blindly copying from Wikipedia entries, wrongfully assuming that they are neutral and correct. It has become the "Ministry of Information", the "one-stop information shop" of the Internet, but no one should fall for the "Newspeak" of a title. Wikipedia has made the task for those seeding disinformation and removing dissenting views easier, more direct and even more anonymous. Lies and Wikipedia, indeed...

### About the Author:

Philip Coppens is editor-in-chief of the online website *Conspiracy Times* (<http://www.conspiracy-times.com>). He has previously contributed nine articles to NEXUS, the most recent being "Archaeological Trench Warfare at Glozel" (see 14/05). His new book, *The New Pyramid Age*, is reviewed in this edition. He is scheduled to speak at the 2007 NEXUS Conference in Queensland, Australia, on 20–22 October. Philip Coppens's website is at <http://www.philipcoppens.com>, and he can be emailed at [info@philipcoppens.com](mailto:info@philipcoppens.com). His own Wikipedia entry, at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip\\_Coppens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_Coppens), was accurate at the time of our going to press...but perhaps won't be for much longer.



## WIKIPEDIA: SILICON VALLEY'S CULT OF MEDICAL MISINFORMATION

by Richard Gale and Gary Null  
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Americans are spending more money on diagnostic tests, surgeries and other medical procedures than ever before. They are also consuming more pills and medications and will receive more treatments than at any other time in US history.

Daily we are inundated with television drug advertisements with the reassuring message, "You don't have to fight this battle alone. We are with you". Commercials project images of laboratories, medical research, a handsome physician and sanitised clinics with happy patients in order to strengthen viewers' faith that medical science is progressing. We are left with the feeling that the big drug companies are diligently working on our behalf to discover new and promising cures for life-threatening diseases.

As pharmaceutical public relations and the mainstream media keep this visual charade burnt into our minds, the US is spending a minimum of \$3.5 trillion on healthcare. Then



there is the citizens' and the economy's burden of an additional \$1.5 trillion loss in work and wages due to illness. Five trillion dollars total. Approximately 18 per cent of

the US GDP. On top of this debt, tens of millions of additional dollars will be spent advertising Big Pharma's message.

And herein lies the fundamental problem. There are more doctors, more hospitals, more drugs and medical procedures than ever before and yet we have not conquered nor made any significant progress in curing any major disease. Instead of making efforts to fund disease prevention and educate the public, prevention has been abandoned altogether. There are volumes of excellent peer-reviewed studies documenting research and clinical experience showing a healthy diet, nutrient supplementation as needed, physical exercise and stress and anxiety management regimens can either completely prevent illnesses or be incorporated into medical treatment protocols successfully. However, there is no profit to be made in prevention.

It is understandable that the pharmaceutical industry would make every effort to keep our medical regime in the forefront; what is less comprehensible on the face value is why Silicon Valley firms such as Google, Wikipedia and Facebook, and the mainstream

media, are in league with the drug companies and the CDC to promulgate a false message about health through the internet.

How did we reach this threshold where trillions of dollars have been tossed into an abyss? One reason is that few voices have been able to reach the public to address the

widespread corruption in corporate science, especially medicine, agriculture, and environmental issues. Honest, independent science is ignored in favour of proprietary

**The US is the world's most medicated country and ranks at the bottom of the pack of developed nations for quality of health. It is also the only nation in the developed world with its average lifespan in decline. A consumer report survey estimates that 55 per cent of Americans regularly take a prescription drug, and among those most take four drugs on average. In 2016, over 4.5 billion prescriptions were filled, earning the pharmaceutical industry over \$200 billion. An earlier estimate conducted and published by the Mayo Clinic found that 70 per cent of Americans are on at least one prescription drug and over 50 per cent are on two. Twenty per cent of patients are on five or more.**

pharmaceutical drugs and genetically modified foods. Fraudulent research has been used to justify nuclear power as a clean green energy. Political officials working on behalf of fossil fuel interests convince us with junk science that hydrofracking poses no health risks and is environmentally friendly. A single Big Pharma corporation with thousands of employees and billions of dollars in sales and profits is deeply connected to investors, public relations firms, federal health officials and the media. All these external invested parties are in turn dependent upon corporate revenue streams. Money is spent to dominate medical schools to push the conventional drug agenda's regime, or to front groups and foundations to buy off so-called experts to debunk critics. Revenues and pay-to-play donations received by Wikipedia and others are one crucial incentive to account for the corruption and deceit in these Silicon firms. Similarly, drug

advertisements to mainstream media networks are little more than payoffs to assure drug companies that objective reporting is negligible that would otherwise put the pharmaceutical company and its medical products into a bad public light.

The benefit Big Pharma receives from hijacking the federal regulators and legislators is protection from the nation's judiciary. So, when a drug like Merck's anti-arthritic Vioxx conservatively kills over 60,000 patients and injures an additional 130,000, there is no immediate FDA recall and deaths are permitted until the crisis reaches a tipping point and health officials are forced to step in. However, seldom are drug executives prosecuted. Vioxx sales earned \$18 billion and Merck only had to pay a \$5 billion settlement. Everyone who knew Vioxx was a defective product had engaged in malice aforethought with no deleterious consequences. The company merely paid a fine and returned to business as usual. And the media simply whitewashed the seriousness of Merck's crimes about Vioxx.

Science creates new solutions through genetic engineering of crops, viruses, bacteria, artificial intelligence, geoengineering, 5G wireless technology, etc. These are held in the public's eyes as great achievements. On the other hand, you will not find Wikipedia nor the mainstream media ever highlighting their flaws and greater risks above advertised benefits; and certainly, private corporations will never leak evidence about their risks and dangers. In the medical field, there are FDA requirements that a drug maker provide all the clinical trial results for a new drug or vaccine. If twenty trials are conducted and only five are favourable for getting the product approved, that is all the company is required to provide. The remaining 15 can be kept sealed and hidden.

We are also led to believe that if a

scientific invention or studies for a new drug appear in the peer-reviewed literature, they have reached a gold standard. Any controversy has been settled. Consequently, a peer-reviewed paper becomes a scientific law unto itself. However, now it has been confirmed repeatedly that the peer-reviewed journal system is also corrupt. In fact, as we will recount, it is filled with fraud, and it will worsen without any efforts made to reform it. Quite simply there is no concerted will nor ethical standard to improve the peer-reviewed system because too much profit is generated.

### **Google today is not only a weapon for promoting the pharmaceutical agenda but now also a drug company itself.**

Wikipedia editors take full advantage of flawed medical literature if the conclusions serve their purpose and agenda. Google, through its algorithmic modelling to censor voices challenging private medicine's status-quo leave people with no way to determine whether scientific literature is bogus or not. Nor whether the science supporting evidence that a natural product can contribute to treating a disease or that studies and analysis implicating vaccines with a wide range of neurological disorders are accurate. Conclusions, regardless of how unsound and erroneous, is all that matters for Google to protect the global medical regime—not just private drug companies but also government health bodies and international organisations such as the World Health Organization.

Google today is not only a weapon for promoting the pharmaceutical agenda but now also a drug company itself. During the past six years, Google's parent

company Alphabet has launched two pharmaceutical companies. In 2013, it founded Calico, run by Genentech's former CEO Arthur Levinson. Calico operates an R&D facility in the San Francisco Bay Area for the discovery of treatments associated with age-related diseases. Two years later, Alphabet founded Verily Life Sciences (previously Google Life Sciences). Both pharma companies are partnering with other drug corporations. Recently, Verily has partnered with the European pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline to form a new drug company, Galvani Bioelectronics for the development of "bioelectronic medicines". The collaboration is costing the companies \$715 million, and the new firm is being chaired by Glaxo's former chairman of its global vaccines business.

In January 2019, Google's president of Customer Solutions, Mary Ellen Coe joined Merck's Board of Directors. Formerly at the corporate consulting McKinsey and Company, her role at Google includes overseeing the firm's global advertising for contracted companies. Merck's chairman Kenneth Frazier remarked in a press release that Coe "will be a significant asset to Merck".

The conflicts of interest are obviously clear. As the world's most advanced search engine, Google has gained control over the internet's most technically sophisticated surveillance systems and algorithms. Therefore, the company has positioned itself as becoming a potential threat to human health.

During the past five years, the pharmaceutical industry has shown a growing interest in the concept of virtual pharmacies, whereby drug companies can leverage their influence over consumers. Social media, notably Wikipedia, YouTube and Facebook have become consumers' most utilised resources for gaining knowledge about

disease, drugs and health. In a University of Sydney survey, Wikipedia was the first source of choice for gaining information about unfamiliar health topics, even among medical professionals. According to a 2013 joint analysis about this emerging trend, conducted by the University of Zurich and the Big Pharma giant Johnson & Johnson, drug companies can use these virtual platforms to tackle the challenges they face on the market and even within the medical communities. However, the analysis also recommended that the best strategy is for Big Pharma to invest heavily in virtual companies and form collaborations. This strategy, laid out six years ago, has picked up steam whereby now companies such as Google and Facebook have been absorbed into the pharmaceutical machinery. The dire results from this marriage are already being felt as Wikipedia and other virtual social media have become just another mouthpiece for Big Pharma.

If Google's transformation into a drug company is not disturbing enough, the world's largest open source site for medical information has become Wikipedia. Moreover, Google and Wikipedia are tied together at the waist. Earlier this year, Google dumped \$3.1 million into Wikipedia, which now brings total contributions to over \$7.5 million during the past decade. Curiously, the announcement of Google's endowment was made at the World Economic Forum at Davos last January. The donation also includes Google's intention to provide Wikipedia editors with its high-tech learning tools. *Wired Magazine* published an article that provides further details about the Google–Wikipedia relationship over the years. With respect to Google's

generous contribution, journalist Louise Matsakis writes, "but the decision isn't altruistic... Google already uses Wikipedia content in a number of its own products.... The company also has used Wikipedia articles to train machine learning algorithms, as well as fight misinformation on YouTube." Now with Jimmy Wales' intention to take on the cause of fighting "fake



news"—which is according to his personal sceptic ideology—his sceptic editors and trolls will have free access to more advanced algorithmic tools to proceed with their agenda to scrub Wikipedia of content favourable towards alternative medicine or content critical of pharmaceutical regime.

When one first visits Wikipedia's home page, front and centre we read "the free encyclopedia that anyone can edit". But it is an ideal that has failed dismally. Content about medical products and therapeutic regimens are penned by completely unqualified editors with no medical background, many who prefer to remain anonymous. Yet Wikipedia editors state with authority that there are no proven health benefits for non-conventional and natural medical therapies. Reading any Wikipedia entry about chiropractic, acupuncture, homeopathy, Chinese medicine, naturopathy or energy medicine, the reader will walk away believing it is all pseudoscience or quackery.

However, collectively there are hundreds of thousands of studies to support these therapies' efficacy and safety. Legitimate scientific inquiry has already shown their efficacy. Independent board-certified physicians have been using complementary and alternative medicine for a long time with excellent results. But this information is either censored or scrubbed from Wikipedia.

Before the internet, it was very difficult for the average person to access reliable consumer information about diseases, mental disorders, drugs and treatments, medical procedures, and surgery. It was equally difficult to find reliable information about alternative medicine as well. A person had to go to great lengths to find actual scientific literature. The internet changed that forever, and companies such as Google and Wikipedia came forward to bring this literature into our homes. All a person has to do is perform a simple query on Google's search engine. Almost always, the inquirer will be directed to Wikipedia in the top several listings. The average person then believes the content will be unbiased and neutral, an accurate and balanced description of the subject matter. However, for medical issues, nothing could be farther from the truth.

For example, we accessed Wikipedia pages for each of the vaccines recommended on the CDC's childhood immunisation schedule. In every case, adverse effects were undermined by emphasising a vaccine's benefits. Not a single entry had a complete list of adverse effects as found on the vaccine maker's manufacturing package insert—which is also easily accessed on the CDC's website. Nor was there to be found a list of vaccine ingredients, many of which are scientifically proven to be toxic. Consequently, a visitor to any Wikipedia vaccine page will only gain a very incomplete and twisted



understanding of the vaccines' actual safety and efficacy. Wikipedia hides the toxicity of the drugs and vaccines it promotes.

So where exactly in the cesspool of modern medicine, food science, and the agrochemical industry are we to discover truth? Few in the scientific and federal health agencies can be trusted anymore. Most are compromised. Rarely is a mainstream journalist trustworthy, and no one can be certain whether a paper appearing in a peer-reviewed science journal or a medical entry on Wikipedia is reliable or not. Even clinical physicians on the front lines of healthcare work in the dark. It is only after large numbers of deaths and injuries, such as with Agent Orange, DDT, aspartame, Vioxx, opiate drugs, etc., that a light goes on. But only for a short time before going dark again.

Our research shows that the majority of pharmaceutical corporations have settled law suits. At the same time our analysis confirms that up to 900,000 Americans die annually from iatrogenic causes. How is it that the pharmaceutical industry and medical establishment has killed more Americans than those who died in Vietnam—without any serious consequences? Now wrap your mind around this. If we take a conservative figure of preventable deaths from medicine, 500,000 per year during the last four decades, that would account for approximately 20 million deaths. And where is the outrage and outcry?

We can compare iatrogenic deaths from modern medicine with deaths reported due to supplements, which is usually certain botanical herbs. In 2017, the *Journal of Medical Toxicology* reported 34 deaths that year from supplements, yet most were due to Ephedra (illegally used because the FDA banned it in 2003), the African herb yohimbe that is often

improperly used as a natural Viagra, and energy drinks. On the other hand, no deaths are reported for vitamin supplementation, although parental overdosing of small children with vitamins is responsible for approximately 80 per cent of adverse vitamin reactions—due to hypervitaminosis from very high and abnormal doses of vitamin A, B3, B6 and D. But nowhere on Wikipedia will you find an accurate accounting of supplements' safety record compared to pharmaceutical drugs.

The reason for American medicine turning into the nation's largest and deadliest battlefield is because scientific corruption is legally protected to proceed with impunity.

The Surgeon General, the heads of federal health agencies, drug makers, the insurance industry, medical schools and professional associations, Google and Wikipedia, and the media operate as a single voice that the American

### ...Google and Wikipedia have been co-opted to serve as the guardians of Big Pharma's culture of corruption.

health system is the best in the world when it is surely not. Corporate interests control everything. Modern medicine has morphed into a religious cult that is incapable of self-reflection about its own vulnerabilities and failures. And numerous patients have been played for fools.

The fact is that all players in the architecture of our medical system are vulnerable to corruption. Private industry and government know this perfectly. The checks and balances between private and public interests have collapsed. Today, the medical regime is a single entity. All of its



parts are consolidated and entwined into a monolithic behemoth to prevent injury to its bottom line.

The media and Silicon Valley firms such as Google and Wikipedia have been co-opted to serve as the guardians of Big Pharma's culture of corruption.

If modern medicine was consistently responsible for positive results that vastly improve our nation's quality of health, we might be more tolerant of its limitations. However, as corruption or incompetence throughout the medical establishment and federal health agencies increases, so has the health of the nation substantially decreased. The nation's health statistics and the annual rise in preventable diseases proves the case.

#### About the Authors

Richard Gale is the Executive Producer of the Progressive Radio Network and a former Senior Research Analyst in the biotechnology and genomic industries.

Dr Gary Null is the host of the nation's longest running public radio program on alternative and nutritional health and a multi-award-winning documentary film director, including *Poverty Inc.* and *Deadly Deception*.

(Source: Extracted from *The Gary Null Show, Wikipedia: Silicon Valley's Cult of Medical Misinformation*, 1 July 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/y5yuy9h6>)