

Corporate manipulation of environmental health research:

A comparison of four industries

Jenny White, MSc, MPH
Lisa Bero, PhD
Dept. of Clinical Pharmacy
University of California, San Francisco

Purpose

- Examine strategies used by four industry groups to manipulate data on health risks in ways that would enhance their credibility and profits.

Four industry groups, four sets of health problems

- Tobacco industry (secondhand smoke)
- Lead industry (lead poisoning)
- Vinyl chloride industry (cancer and other diseases)
- The “dusty trades” – mining, foundries, sandblasting and others (silicosis)

Data sources

- Legacy Tobacco Documents Library, University of California, San Francisco
(<http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu>)
- Lead, vinyl chloride and silica industry internal documents provided by Dr. David Rosner, Columbia University

Methods

- Reviewed primary source documents cited in 12 scholarly articles related to tobacco industry manipulation of research – approximately 300 documents total.
- Reviewed all documents provided by Dr. Rosner.
- Coded using Bero's categories of research manipulation.

Hypothesis

The four industry groups used similar strategies to manipulate data on risk, including:

- Fund research that supports their interests
- Publish research that supports their interests
- Suppress unfavorable research
- Criticize unfavorable research
- Disseminate favorable research to policymakers and the lay press

Fund and publish research: Tobacco

Philip Morris' world-wide ETS Consultants' Program – the “Whitecoats”

Lisbon. Our European consultants have organised and will conduct a major scientific conference in Lisbon next month on indoor air quality in warm climates. More than 100 scientists from throughout the world will

scientific groups -- all quite independent of the industry, and all made possible by our consultants.

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The papers will be published both in the form of conference proceedings and, more selectively, in a journal run by one of our consultants. The focus of

The focus of conference will not be tobacco; rather, the point

the conference will not be tobacco; rather, the point of the conference is to show the insignificance of ETS by emphasising the genuine problems of air quality in warm climates. and important.

Fund and publish research: Lead

4. Lead Poisoning - Hardly a day goes by but what this subject receives some attention at the headquarters of the Association. We are constantly investigating alleged cases of lead poisoning and endeavoring to correct misstatements about lead poisoning.

At the request of Dr. Aub of the Harvard Medical School, and his associate, Dr. Fairhall, we are contributing \$10,000 to Harvard College to continue the lead investigations over a two year period. Dr. Fairhall is planning to make a

\$10,000 to Harvard College to continue the lead investigations

My conclusion, after consulting various experts in Boston, Washington

proven. A. Dr. Aub told me he felt that children who have sub-normal appetites, or the disease known as "pica" which caused them to chew on inedible articles, were sub-normal to start with.

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Fund and publish research: Vinyl chloride

Manufacturing Chemists Association
meeting, 1/24/1967: Participants agree to
fund an epidemiological study of polyvinyl
chloride workers which will

“hopefully be expected to... confirm that the
condition is purely an occupational disease
and in no way affects the general public using
PVC products.”

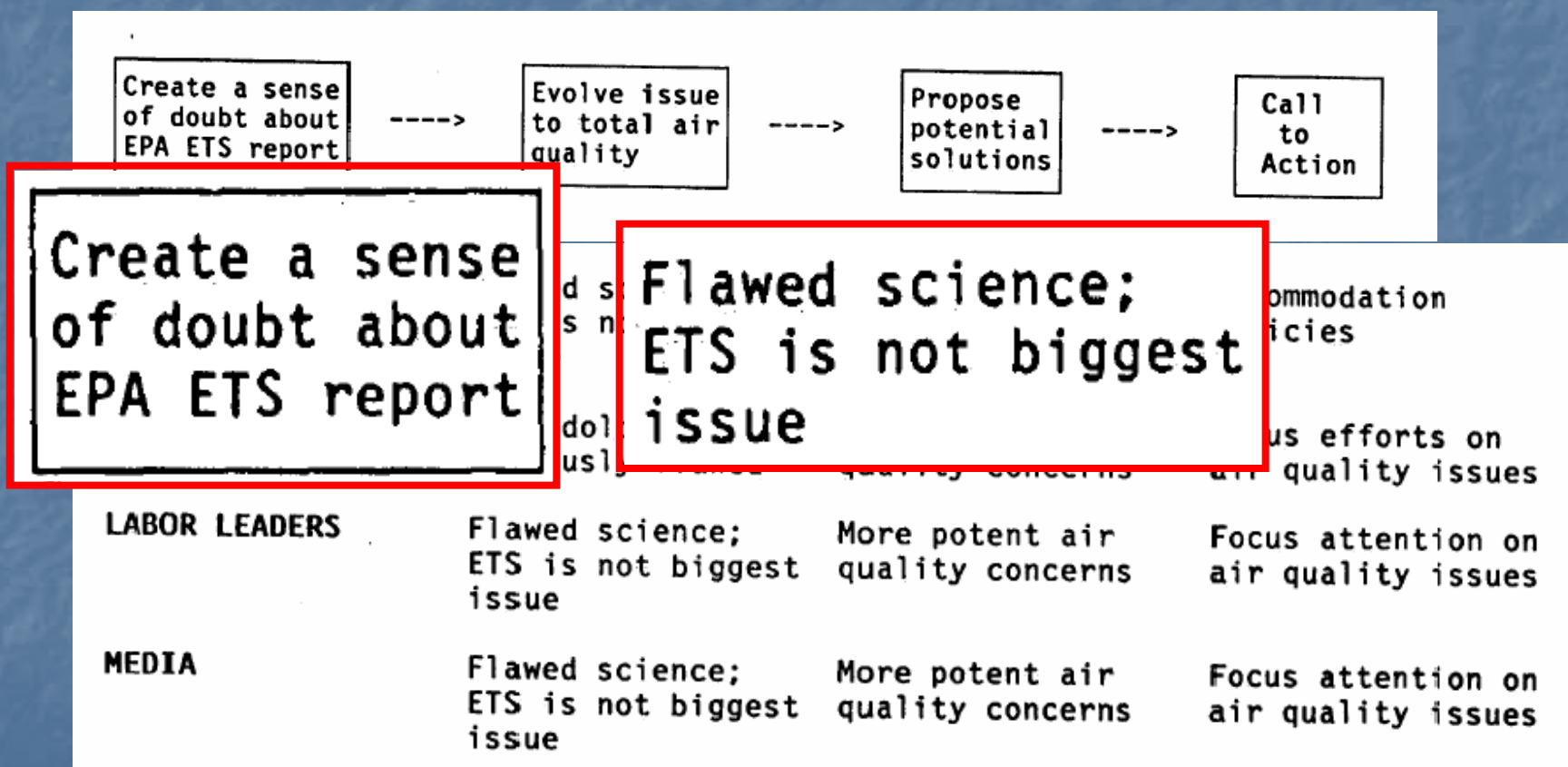
Fund and publish research: Silicosis

If this work were to be centralized in Mellon Institute, it could be carried out as a part of our air hygiene research. The director appointed to handle the investigation would also be the head of the institution or organization which the industries would set up. In this

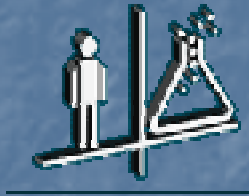
way, the work could be carried out in a most confidential manner as to who was supporting the research and no one would know what industries or individuals were contributing to the fund. This would enable the organization to get soundly established, so that if later on it was desired to come out in the open this could be arranged.

E.R. Weidlein, Mellon Institute, an
industry-funded research group, 1935

Criticize unfavorable research: Tobacco



Criticize unfavorable research: Lead



American Council on Science and Health (ASCH)

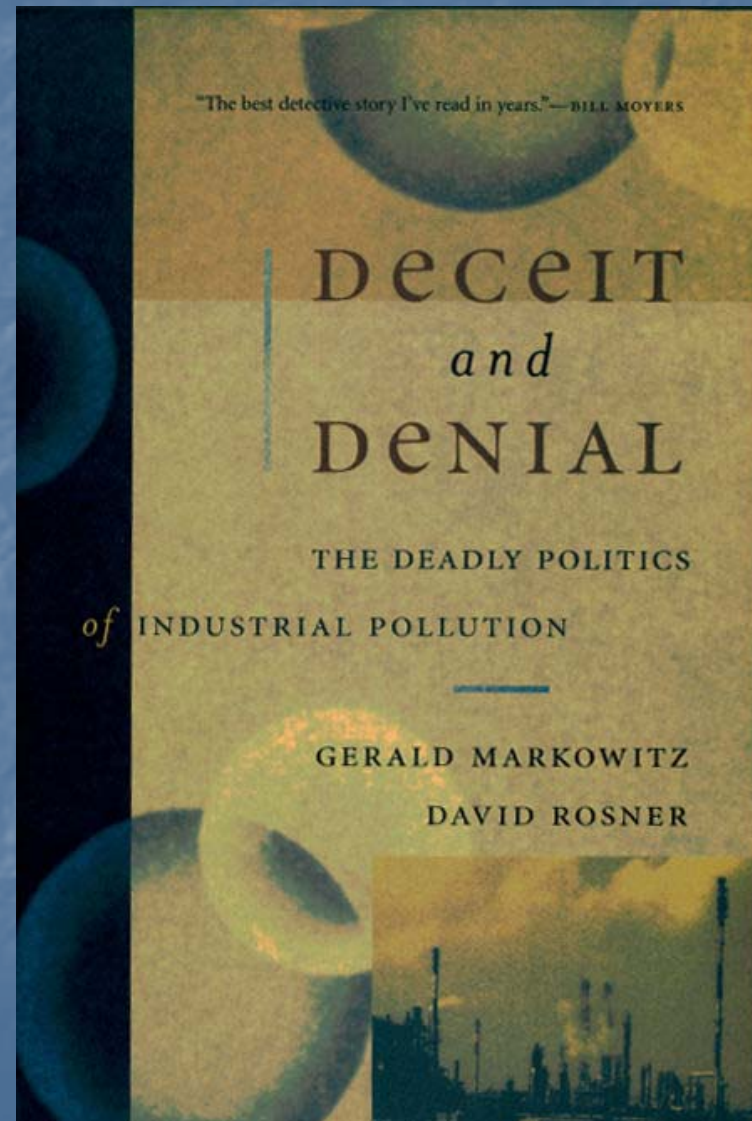
-- funders have included Ethyl Corporation, Exxon, Ford, Shell, Union Carbide, Dow, Monsanto, etc.

“Claims of subtle neurobehavioral effects in children due to elevated BLL are not based on firm evidence; many studies that attempt to link low-level lead exposure with learning disabilities, behavioral problems, attention deficit disorders, and lowered IQ are complicated by multiple confounding socioeconomic and familial factors.”

Posted July 1, 2000

Criticize unfavorable research: Vinyl chloride

Deceit and Denial “represents the highest standards of the history profession” – American Historical Association



Criticize unfavorable research: Silicosis

4. Is there a conscientious discrimination between occupational as opposed to nonoccupational or natural causes for the disability?

5. Is there constant vigilance in avoiding the expression of that which is speculation as though it were in reality a fact? Where substantiating evidence is not available, are expressions of thought scrupulously labeled as opinion?

6. Is there willingness to frankly admit ignorance of specific information?

Thoughtful consideration of these questions should lead to an appreciation of the great responsibilities of the medical expert. The scarcity of factual information and lack of knowledge of already established fact are responsible for the major part of the medical expert's shortcomings. Additional study is certainly needed.

Suppress unfavorable research: Tobacco

PRIOR TO RECEIPT YOUR TELEX JULY 3 HOYT OF TIRC AGREED TO WITHHOLD DISCLOSURE
BATTELLE REPORT TO TIRC MEMBERS OR SAB UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE FROM ME. FINCH
AGREES SUBMISSION BATTELLE OR GRIFFITH DEVELOPMENTS TO SURGEON GENERAL
UNDESIRABLE AND WE AGREE CONTINUANCE OF BATTELLE WORK USEFUL BUT DISTURBED
AT ITS IMPLICATIONS RE CARDIOVASCULAR DISORDERS.

Lawyer, British American
Tobacco, 1963

Suppress unfavorable research: Lead

Getting wind of a forthcoming report on the suitability of plastic pipe for potable water supplies in preparation at the University of Michigan, we arranged to see the galley proof of the report and, through contacts with members of the advisory committee on the report, were able to secure elimination of a number of statements adverse to the use of lead stabilizers. ~~Such~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~report~~ ~~as~~ ~~follows:~~ ~~This~~ ~~week~~ ~~available~~ ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~public~~ ~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~report~~ ~~itself~~ ~~and~~ ~~we~~ ~~are~~ ~~able~~ ~~to~~ ~~secure~~ ~~elimination~~ ~~of~~ ~~a~~ ~~number~~ ~~of~~ ~~statements~~ ~~adverse~~ ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~use~~ ~~of~~ ~~lead~~ ~~stabilizers.~~

Lead Industry Association, 1956

Suppress unfavorable research: Vinyl chloride

erations. It was judged that possible consumer safety, and related potential hazards would not be pertinent to a presentation to NIOSH which is concerned with employee health matters.

3. All references to use of vinyl chloride in aerosol propellants were removed, since it is a minor part of the industry and is not a worker-exposure problem except for beauticians and can fillers. (This was removed at the insistence of UCC and Allied,

Manufacturing Chemists' Assn., 1973

Suppress unfavorable research: Silicosis

meeting would accomplish nothing. The conference would be a modern **Tower of Babel**, for the several groups do not speak the same language or understand each other's viewpoints: As we have repeatedly said

MISS PERKINS DOES, is gross misconception. Mass meetings are excellent for safety education and propaganda, but silicosis requires something quite different. It is far too complex, too involved and too little understood to be suited to mass-meeting methods.

Disseminate favorable research: Tobacco

TALKING POINTS TI'S COMMENTS IN RESPONSE TO OSHA'S RFI ON INDOOR AIR POLLUTANTS

Additionally, several independent scientists and ventilation experts commented separately on technical matters at TI's request.

Studies indicate that occupational exposures to ETS are, under normal conditions, minimal. The available data do not support the claim that ETS exposure is associated with a statistically significant increased risk of lung cancer or of other disease.

Disseminate favorable research: Lead

NO PUBLIC HAZARD FROM LEAD SEEN,

MUSKIE SUBCOMMITTEE ON POLLUTION TOLD

Washington -- From results of extensive scientific investigations,

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MUSKIE SUBCOMMITTEE ON POLLUTION TOLD

Washington -- From results of extensive scientific investigations,

"I can positively assert that lead constitutes no public health hazard in America today," Felix E. Wormser, former president of Lead Industries Association, today told the Senate Public Works Subcommittee on Air and Water Pollution.

conducted in 16 countries, including the United States, that found there has been no increase in lead contamination in the last two decades.

President, Lead Industry
Association, 1966

Disseminate favorable research: Vinyl chloride

“It must be emphasized that the information developed thus far does not yet constitute a body of ‘hard data’ on the totality of the vinyl chloride hazard... The workers who died were exposed to high levels of vinyl chloride for long periods of time. [A] study... conducted by the Dow Chemical Company at its Midland division... showed a general cancer increase among heavily exposed workers (above 200 parts per million on a time-weighted average for an eight-hour day) but none among workers below that level. No angiocarcinomas were found.”

President, Society of Plastics
Industry, to NIOSH, 1974

Disseminate favorable research: Silicosis

Science News Letter, November 30, 1946

MEDICINE

Silicosis Is Not Threat To Workers' Health

➤ SILICOSIS, once great hazard to the health of industrial workers, is no longer a threat.

In one research project involving 28 plants, having operations using millions of tons of dangerous silica...

This triumph of scientific research to protect workers' health was announced by Dr. F. R. Holden, W. C. L. Hemeon and T. F. Hatch of the Industrial Hy-

by Dr. F. R. Holden, W. C. L. Hemeon and T. F. Hatch of the Industrial Hy-

giene Foundation at its meeting in Pittsburgh.

"The dangerous trades of our fathers have all but disappeared," they reported.

Potentially poisonous dusts, fumes and gases can and are being used every day in modern industry without danger.

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necessary to distinguish between the silicosis dust problem in industry and the problem.

Not infrequently we find nuisance dust exposures to be more injurious to the mechanical equipment than to workmen. Good progress has been made in

research directed toward more exact measurement and identification of different kinds of dust."

Science News Letter, November 30, 1946

Conclusion

The tobacco, lead, vinyl chloride, and silica industries used similar strategies to manipulate research on risk.

Solutions

- Transparency: disclose funding sources, roles of sponsor, and financial ties of investigators and critics
- Complete separation of funding decisions and sponsors (independent scientific panels)
- Institutional bans on corporate funding

Explore industry documents:

- <http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/>
- <http://www.chemicalindustryarchives.org/>
- <http://www.deceitanddenial.org/docs/>
- <http://dida.library.ucsf.edu/>



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AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE

Disseminate favorable research: Lead

The Lead Industries Association in its internal thinking has always met the problem of lead poisoning frankly and fearlessly. Extern-

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I feel that the word of the Lead Industries Association might carry even more weight than if some other agency, used as a screen, were utilized.

We have not attempted to disseminate any information that was not backed by the soundest scientific, medical and hygienic research we could obtain.

It is obviously not possible to procure the services of any education institution for what would be, in part, publicity or public relations purposes.

I feel that the word of the Lead Industries Association might carry even more weight than if some other agency, used as a screen, were utilized in order to do the job for us. This point may only be academic, however,

President, Lead Industry Association, 1945