

Suppressing Scientific Discourse on Vaccines? Self-perceptions of Researchers and Practitioners

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The deliberate dismantling of science didn't start two years ago

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In late 2019, I joined two other Israeli criminologists and a health risk communications expert in a research project to study the suppression of scientific dissent around the topic of vaccines. At the time, none of us could have ever imagined what was looming right around the corner.

Two of them (Natti Ronel and Ety Elisha) had written a review of a Hebrew-language book called "Turtles All The Way Down," which was a critical review of vaccine safety science. The thing about the book is that it was published anonymously, as the author(s) feared the potential retribution that might ensue.

Their review was published in the Hebrew-language journal, *Medicine* (Refuah), which is the journal of the Israeli Medical Association, sort of like the Israeli equivalent of JAMA. I won't go into how it ever got published in the book review section, but the review simply focused on the absurdity of a scientist who felt the need to publish a

scientific book anonymously due to fear of the consequences. Ironically, the publication of the review caused a huge uproar (you can read more about that [here where it was covered in Science](#)), and the review itself was retracted, or more precisely it simply disappeared from the on-line version of the journal.

So we started a project to study the phenomena of scientific censorship and suppression of scientific dissent in the field of vaccines by interviewing scientists and doctors who had either had their papers retracted or who had faced attempts to suppress their views. Notably, the only retracted papers in the field of vaccinology that we could identify *all raised questions about the safety of vaccines*. And this was all **BEFORE** the COVID pandemic hit. (We've got another one that covers the COVID period that should be coming out fairly soon.)

In other words, everything it describes happened before the pandemic. The censorship and suppression we've witnessed these last two years already existed – it has only kicked into overdrive. The deliberate dismantling of science didn't start two years ago.

If it isn't clear why criminologists would be interested in this topic, consider the following general definition of crime: *force or fraud in the pursuit of self-interest*.

So without further ado, you can read both papers embedded (hopefully) below:

Elisha, Guetzkow, Shir-Raz and Ronel. 2022. "[Suppressing Scientific Discourse on Vaccines? Self-perceptions of researchers and practitioners.](#)" HEC Forum. [\[Download PDF\]](#) or [\[Read/Download PDF\]](#)

Elisha, Guetzkow, Shir-Raz and Ronel. 2021. "[Retraction of scientific papers: the case of vaccine research.](#)" Critical Public Health. [\[Download PDF\]](#) or [\[Read/Download PDF\]](#)

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