

Big Pharma's Phony "Grassroots" Campaign to Stifle Vaccine Critic McCathry

On August 1, Mark Crispin Miller, Professor of Media, Culture and Communication at New York University entered a blog post entitled, 'Big Pharma's faking a "grass-roots" campaign to keep Jenny McCarthy off "The View."' He then posted an article by Steve Schneider mentioning which pharmaceutical industry cronies are linked to a petition circulated by Change.org that seeks to have McCarthy replaced on "The View" before she can even shoot an episode.

The petition is bylined "by Voices for Vaccines; St. Paul, Minnesota." One look at the specific names involved in Voices for Vaccines makes it clear why the organization might be very interested in preventing any anti-vaccination talk from coming to "The View": The Scientific Advisory Board of Voices For Vaccines (VFV) includes Paul A. Offit, identified in a CBS News report as holding a \$1.5 million dollar Merck-funded research chair at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Offit "holds the patent on an anti-diarrhea vaccine he developed with Merck" according to CBS and, in 2008, future royalties for that vaccine, Rotateq, were sold for \$182 million.

According to National Vaccine Information Center President, Barbara Loe Fisher, the Voices for Vaccines board is rounded out by another advisor (Stanley A. Plotkin) who is a vaccine developer, and two others (Alan R. Hinman and Deborah L. Wexler) with significant ties to the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Dr. Meryl Nass, a Maine-based Medical Doctor and public-health blogger explained that the pharmaceutical industry "funds CDC through the conduit CDC Foundation." In turn, the CDC funds the Immunization Action Coalition, another pro-vaccination advocacy group. VFV advisor Wexler (mentioned above) also heads the IAC.

VFV is also a project of the Task Force for Global Health whose board of directors is chaired by Jane Fugate Thorpe, an Atlanta products-liability lawyer whose official bio according to Schneider trumpets her "strategic defense of industry-leading corporations and industry coalitions, particularly with regard to Daubert strategies." Schneider writes, "'Daubert" refers to the standard governing the admissibility of expert testimony at trial. In other words, Thorpe has made her reputation shielding product manufacturers from individuals like the concerned parents VFV purports to represent.' Big pharma's campaign to stifle vaccine critics has no "grassroots" whatsoever.