

HighWire – Andrew Wakefield, M.D. – the Whole Story, with Del Bigtree

12-27-18 35,000 views 1 hr. 16 min. (direct 2:30 to 1 hr. 6 min.)

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This is the narrative summary of the above interview of Dr. Wakefield by Del Bigtree on Highwire on Dec. 27, 2018 concerning the allegations made against Wakefield by Brian Deer, an investigator hired by Rupert Murdoch, and the loss of Wakefield's medical license.

Background for 1998 study in *Lancet*. Wakefield was at Royal Free Hospital in London. He led a team of 19 medical researchers. Wakefield was trained in surgery, and became a researcher in gastroenterology. His interest turned to Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. He saw primary vascular injury to the blood vessels in the intestine in Crohn's disease and the death of tissue. They wondered if it was a germ that caused it. So he studied *Field's Virology*. Of all the diseases described there, he discovered that measles can produce a Crohn's like disease. It is an atypical pattern. He did work with Swedes because they had four mothers who were pregnant and had measles during pregnancy. That is very rare. But three of their four such babies developed Crohn's disease as infants. That is a very significant finding. There is a 60 million to 1 chance against that (unless the measles virus causes Crohn's disease). Usually, the outset of Crohn's disease is at 30 years of age. So the question arose, is the measles vaccine the cause of most Crohn's disease?

1994 measles study. So he did a study that was published in 1994 of persons vaccinated with measles, who got fever leading to autism. In May 1995 a woman took her child to get the measles vaccine, after which the child was unwell, never the same again, and became autistic. The mother told Wakefield her child has terrible gastrointestinal problems. You could ascribe them to psychological or behavioral problems. But first you should eliminate any physical cause. The mother mentioned there was an epidemic of autism. She asked Wakefield to help. He said he would help. That's his idea of what medical doctors should do. He called John Walker-Smith, the founder of pediatric gastroenterology, who then came to Royal Free Hospital, and brought patients with him. They planned to investigate inflammatory bowel disease and autism, including whether it's psychological and neurological. Royal Free was looking at liver and GI (gastrointestinal) disease. It's part of the University of London.

Consents given for the study. The doctors saw 183 children, some were from America. The parents and the doctors must all consent for the patients to be part of the study. They all did. There were 12 patients in the published *Lancet* study. They investigated the relationship and did their report as a "case series". They were not studying whether vaccines caused autism or testing a hypothesis, but they looked at a constellation of symptoms and signs with the idea of generating a hypothesis about what is accounting for the inflammatory bowel disease. They got the parental report of the history after the MMR.

Their conclusion: further investigation should be done of the relation of the MMR to autism and the GI symptoms. There were 13 authors. Doctors from the GI department, pathology, lab technicians for slides, Dr. Merch. The last author is the senior clinician, Dr. Walker-Smith. The first author is Dr. Wakefield, who synthesizes the information from the other doctors in the study. The study took 3-4 months. The first patient came to Dr. Wakefield in 1995. Dr. Walker-Smith came to Royal Free in 1996.

Dr. Wakefield would gather all the information from the other doctors and write it up. He sent the drafts to them, and they would respond with change. They rewrote it again and again. Everyone must be happy with it before it is released. One of the doctors called it child disintegrative disorder, which is basically the same as autism. Dr. Wakefield also sent it to the Dept. of Health. He knew there would be a lot of anxiety about the report, and that it would get worldwide attention. He knew he couldn't censor it to protect the drug companies. Dr. Walker-Smith wrote to the head of vaccines and said that it would be difficult to exclude vaccines as the cause. Dr. Wakefield notified his colleagues. Wakefield reviewed a 250-page report on the safety studies of the MMR, and found they were very deficient, and the MMR should never have been approved. He wrote the Dean of the Medical School and his colleagues.

He raised the question of what do we tell parents to do? Wakefield felt that we can only recommend to vaccinate with the measles vaccine alone, and not the MMR. They looked at a large number of patients, and only 1 patient had a child with autism who got only the measles vaccine. The others, or about 182, all got the MMR. Did Wakefield have an agenda against the MMR? His point is that you need to test a hypothesis and the way to do that is to give the measles vaccine separately. Need to test a rigorous hypothesis. We know measles can cause inflammation of the brain but in the GI tract also. They sent samples to Dr. John O'Leary blind.

The 2004 Attack on Wakefield by Brian Deer. The *Lancet* study was published in 1998. The Brian Deer attack came in 2004, six years later. Deer was working for Rupert Murdoch, Owner of Fox News and the *Sunday Times* (UK). The *Sunday Times* reported a research scandal about Wakefield by Brian Deer. Three days later Deer wrote to the British Medical Board and said "I will lay out the evidence of a serious professional misconduct." Bigtree says he had thought that doctors had said that. Actually it was just Deer who was not a doctor. This was in a context of pending litigation against GSK by thousands of patients in the U.S. and UK with potentially many \$ millions in liability. Rupert's son James Murdoch was put on the board of GSK with the goal to protect GSK in the media. They needed something big on the MMR. Brian Deer's role was to create it.

Deer claimed Dr. Wakefield improperly conducted invasive procedures. Deer charged that Dr. Wakefield conducted invasive procedures such as Intubations and lumbar punctures on handicapped autistic children that were of no benefit to the child. Deer alleged that Wakefield had two purposes for his investigation: (a) to find the gastrointestinal problems in autism and (b) to advance litigation. He charged that the children were prescreened by lawyers in the litigation. Wakefield says none of the children were brought to them by the lawyers, and he did not even become aware of the litigation until January 1996 well after the study began.

Wakefield was to be an expert witness for litigation involving the MMR. He was asked to be an expert in the litigation, which he agreed to do on behalf of plaintiffs. He told his medical colleagues that he'd be testifying in the litigation. His role as an expert would be to describe his findings. No child was a litigant at the time they came to Royal Free by Dr. Wakefield's group to be examined for a cases series on autism. Deer's claim that the "children were pre-screened by lawyers" was a lie. Wakefield says he knew it was a big risk to take the side of the plaintiffs and question vaccine safety. No attorney brought any patients to him.

The Lancet study was not funded by the attorneys for plaintiffs in litigation. Deer also charged that the funding for Wakefield's study published in *Lancet* in 1998 came from the attorneys. Wakefield says that

not a penny for his study came from the attorneys. He said as a scientist the question was how to investigate the next step. That was to look for virus in the diseased tissues. He says the *Lancet* Report was finished before the Legal Aid Board funding became available to fund that second study. Richard Barr of Legal Aid later wrote a letter, which is shown in Highwire, which said that Wakefield never had a conflict, and that Wakefield disclosed his role as an expert witness for the litigation and his role in the previous case series report that was published in *Lancet*. Barr mentioned that Wakefield had published a 1994 article in *Lancet* studying perinatal exposure to measles and Crohn's disease. He said there were "so many untruths" in the attacks on Wakefield.

Vaccine makers faced litigation with potentially massive damages for injuries caused by the vaccination. Wakefield says the drug companies were terrified because they knew they had not adequately tested the MMR, and that they faced potentially massive damages from litigation, including in the United States. There were also concerns that showing a problem with the MMR would harm the government's and big pharma's reputation. The MMR mfrs. knew that the previous MMR caused meningitis, which was from the mumps. GSK had an indemnity agreement on that vaccine, which was not legal, in 1994. That MMR was introduced and used between 1988 and 1994, and was withdrawn. Then they introduced a better MMR. But Dr. Wakefield says that was not tested either.

Deer then accused Wakefield of "fraud.". The *Lancet* article was never used for litigation, and could not be because it was just a "case series" and did not test causation or a hypothesis.

Deer accuses Wakefield of seeking a rival patent to the MMR. Deer also accused Wakefield of seeking a patent on the creation of a rival measles vaccine to the MMR. Wakefield says that was not a vaccine. They took a fraction of mother's colostrum called transfer factor, a product that boosts the immune system. It could benefit people whose immune systems were compromised to the point they could not be vaccinated. The transfer factor helps the body naturally get rid of the virus. It was never a rival to the MMR. Transfer factor does not cause the production of antibodies. Deer just ignored that fact. The patent was applied for by the Royal Free Hospital, not by Wakefield. So Wakefield would not have profited from it if it had produced a profit. The hospital's seeking the patent was a result of Margaret Thatcher's policy of cutting funding for their work. So they were encouraged to seek their own source of funds. In the six years after the *Lancet* article to the time of Deer's attacks, nothing was done with the patent. But Deer got the headline he wanted. The truth was buried. Deer knew that for six years nothing had been done on that vaccine.

Wakefield says that HHS should do safety studies. Deer alleged two big motives by Wakefield: (1) to get money through the litigation; and (2) to get money from the transfer factor "vaccine."

Deer falsely charges that Wakefield needed to get ethical consents. What was the crime of Wakefield? He learned of Deer's attack addressed to the General Medical Council in 2004-2005. He wrote: "I welcome the investigation," and that the issue needed to be clarified. The Deer attack went on for pages, and alleged that Wakefield needed and didn't have Ethical Committee approval for a clinical investigation. But Wakefield says no ethical permission was needed. If you are testing a hypothesis, such as whether the MMR causes or does not cause autism, then you would need permission. But he was just doing a case series. Or, if you are doing biopsies, then you would need ethical approval. Dr. Walker-Smith obtained all of the necessary ethical approvals for that before he came to Royal Free Hospital. By the time of Deer's charges Dr. Wakefield was in America. Dr. Wakefield showed the approvals to the GMC but they ignored it.

The decision of the high court exonerating Dr. Walker-Smith. However, Judge Mitting's 85 page court decision on the appeal was entirely in Walker-Smith's favor. It founds that Walker-Smith received all the approvals he needed from the Ethics Committee to obtain biopsies. He carried the approvals with him to Royal Free hospital for the *Lancet* study. Another charge was that the biopsies involved more than minimal risk for slight or minimal benefit. However, Walker-Smith showed that one child benefited from feeding. Judge Mitting said the action of the General Medical Council was quashed:

The panel's determination cannot stand. I therefore quash it. Miss Glyn, on the basis of sensible instructions, does not invite me to remit it to a fresh Fitness to Practice panel for redetermination. The end result is that the finding of serious professional misconduct and the sanction of erasure (loss of medical license) are both quashed.

Wakefield should have gotten his license back. Thus Dr. Walker-Smith got his license back. Wakefield did no invasive procedures or any procedures on the children. He merely collated the information from the doctors who examined the patients. The same children were involved for both Walker-Smith and Wakefield. Thus, Wakefield would have achieved the same favorable complete reversal as Walker-Smith if he had been able to afford to follow through with his appeal. Walker-Smith was able to appeal because he had insurance to cover it. Wakefield appealed but did not have insurance to cover the legal fees and so he had to withdraw his appeal. But the vindication of Walker-Smith would have applied to Wakefield as well. After Walker-Smith won his appeal and got his license back, Wakefield could not reinstate his appeal because the law doesn't allow that.

After Walker-Smith was vindicated in the appeals court *Lancet* should have reinstated the 1998 article, but they did not.

The British Medical Journal article. After the court of appeals decision Deer then made another attack, charging Wakefield with fraud which the *British Medical Journal* reported. The charge related to child #11 in the study. Deer claimed to the BMJ that child #11 was followed from 13 to 18 months, and that at 15 months he was vaccinated. Deer charged that Wakefield manipulated the date when autism symptoms appeared. The *Lancet* article claimed the child was normal until after the MMR. A question asked in the study was when did child #11 first have symptoms? Deer talked with the father, who is from America, and falsely told him that the *Lancet* study said that his child's autism started at 15 months, within a week after the MMR. The father told him that's "completely inaccurate," and that his child's autism did not start until two and a half to three months later.

Dan Olmstead's research and child #11. Deer then used that statement to attack Wakefield in the BMJ article by making it appear that Wakefield had lied by claiming the autism started sooner than it did. A journalist Dan Olmstead did some research on these issues, and is now deceased. In fact, the *Lancet* study expressly states that the first "behavioral symptom" after the MMR occurred one week after, and that the symptom was "current viral pneumonia for 8 weeks following MMR," i.e. not autism, as falsely represented by Deer. The father wrote that "One of the incorrect statements in my son's discharge report was that autistic symptoms were seen from 13-18 months, while the vaccination was at 15 months." Thus, the father also obtained this false information from Deer, which was used to make Wakefield appear to be a liar and to be trying to make a case that autism was caused by the MMR even though the autistic symptoms first occurred at 13 months, or two months before child #11 got the MMR, whereas the *Lancet* article makes clear the first symptom after the MMR started a week later, as viral pneumonia, and the autism didn't start until 2½ to 3 months after he got the MMR. Wakefield says

Deer is a sociopathic liar who manipulates the story to say what he wants. The father in his this letter also states that he requested Royal Free hospital that his son be part of the autism study. This letter destroys Deer's credibility. The real fraud was Deer's false representations to the father of child #11 about the study and about the *Lancet* article.

John Stone reached out to the British Medical Journal and said you need to come clean. You are funded by Merck and by Glaxo Smith Kline and both make the MMR. You didn't disclose that when you published the article. Theona Godly of BMJ said that we should have admitted and that we will publish a clarification. The entire article was founded on a lie from start to finish. The BMJ is in bed with the government.

Wakefield says "we're winning." They have to pass laws mandating vaccinations because they can't convince the parents. *Lancet* should have reinstated the 1998 article. The incidence of autism is now 1 in 59. (Actually, according to the CDC in October 2018 it's 1 in 40.)