THE SKEPTIC ARENA.COM

September 13, 2015

Coca-Cola and the problem with industry-funded research

by James McIntosh of Medical News Today

*The Global Energy Balance Network (GEBN) is an international organization led by reputable scientists of public health based in universities across the world. The research focus of the group is energy balance - a state of equilibrium between calories consumed and calories burned through physical activity.*

*... the practice of industry funding science is nothing new. It costs a lot of money to conduct scientific research, and many researchers - in the fields of medicine and technology, as well as nutrition - are funded through grants from corporations that are directly associated with the area of research.*

*At present, more than one third of adults in the US are obese, around 78.6 million people. Dr. Blair says that the main reason for this is that too many people are eating more calories than they burn on too many days:*

*Energy balance advocates could point to the example of swimmer Michael Phelps, winner of eight gold medals in the 2008 Olympics and the most decorated Olympian of all time. At the time, a lot of attention was paid to the size of Phelps' diet, in which he could consume 12,000 calories a day. Three fried egg sandwiches, one five-egg omelet, one bowl of grits, three slices of French toast and three chocolate-chip pancakes. And this was just for breakfast.*

James, so far - so good.

*However, there is an overwhelming amount of scientific evidence that demonstrates that, although sedentary behavior can lead to weight gain, a bad diet is the most influential factor in obesity.*

James, you need to define what you mean by "a bad diet."

A quick question James:

was Michael Phelps' diet, as described above ... a "bad diet?"

(Then please explain why or why not).

You aren't going to answer that one, are you James?

*One study of sedentary, overweight adults published in Obesity examined the effects of exercise on weight loss. Around 200 adults were recruited and randomly assigned to exercise between 5-6 hours a week - more than twice the recommended weekly amount of exercise - while following the same diets as before. After following the exercise programs for a year, the researchers found that the male participants had lost an average of 3.5 pounds and the female participants an average of 2.5, with nearly all of the participants remaining overweight or obese.*

James, do the math - it doesn't add up. How can they increase one side of the equation while keeping the other side the same ... and not see a noticeable difference?

Something is fishy. That demands an explanation. As a journalist, it was your responsibility to research that one ... not ours.

*An observational study of children and sugar-sweetened drink consumption published in The Lancet reported that for each additional 12-ounce soda children consumed each day, their risk of becoming obese increased by 60% during a 1.5 year follow-up period.*

James, a more valid comparison would have been to compare that study with one conducted, say 50 years ago, when we didn't have an obesity epidemic. Weren't they drinking sodas back then too? Are kids drinking more sodas now? Do the sodas contain more sugar now than before? And with all the diet sodas and diet foods and weight loss organizations that we didn't have back then ... how come we are fatter now?

*In an editorial published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, Dr. Aseem Malhotra and colleagues also state that physical activity does not promote weight loss.*

James, simple math ... proves him wrong.

*"It is where the calories come from that is crucial," they argue.*

James, I know of at least one scientific study that disagreed. They fed rats different diets to see if it made a difference where the calories came from ... it didn't.

*"Sugar calories promote fat storage and hunger. Fat calories induce fullness or 'satiation.'" Poor diet is described by the authors as generating "more disease than physical inactivity, alcohol and smoking combined."*

James, then Michael Phelps ... should be dead.

*Industry funding of research is commonplace and, unfortunately, studies have demonstrated that funding sources can influence the outcomes of clinical trials. There is no question that funding sources can influence the outcomes of clinical trials - just look at the dishonesty of the tobacco industry for example. The question is whether or not, you can prove that Coca-cola is trying to influence the outcomes of clinical trials.*

Well James, do you have that proof or not?

*Multiple studies indicate that industry funding increases the likelihood of a study producing positive results. Among interventional studies, the researchers found that 0% of the studies with any industry funding came to unfavorable conclusions compared with 37% of the studies with no industry funding.*

James, where did the 37% get their funding from? And how do you know that the unfavorable conclusions were not biased against the industry? Why do you assume that only the industry can be biased?

*The authors stated their study indicated that beverage industry-funded studies are four to eight times more likely to produce results favorable to the industry in comparison with studies that are independently funded.*

James, if you have evidence against Coca-cola, now would be an excellent time for you to present it. If you have none, then concluding that they are attempting to influence the study because others have done so, is a logical fallacy.

<http://www.nizkor.org/features/fallacies/division.html>

*The findings of such studies suggest that the financial support Coca-Cola gives to GEBN could be very influential in the researchers' output.*

James, "could be" is not the same as "has been proven to be."

James, you should consider a career at Fox News. Instead of your resume, just shoot them a copy of this hack job and I predict you'll be sitting next to Megyn Kelly within a month.

*Marion Nestle, a professor of nutrition, food studies and public health at New York University, says that the agenda is to "get these researchers to confuse the science and deflect attention from dietary intake."*

James, and her evidence for that accusation ... is?

And why does she think that researchers are that naive and so easy to confuse?

*On her website Food Politics, Nestle regularly posts links to industry-funded studies that reach expected results that can be used for marketing purposes.*

James, please explain why studies which produce expected results are a problem. If later, for example, everyone decides to adopt Nestle's position, and studies then produce expected results supporting her position ... will it still be a problem?

And can you explain what is wrong with using study results for marketing purposes? What would Nestle prefer that companies use for marketing purposes in lieu of scientific studies?

*Dr. Bruce Lee, director of the Global Obesity Prevention Center at Johns Hopkins University, told Healthline that Coca-Cola and GEBN's arrangement crosses a line by promoting a view that sits outside of scientific consensus.*

James, do you realize that Lee just limited all scientific endeavor to only those things allowed by the scientific consensus?

It's stunning that you can't see the insanity of that position. Just take a moment to think about the implications of what Lee said.

Actually, I think "stunning" may have been an understatement. How far do you think science would advance if it were limited to studying only those things that fell into the scientific consensus?

*"When you start trying to say that something is a greater cause of obesity, that's potentially when we get into a problem," he said.*

James, and yet that is exactly what they did with diet, isn't it?

Maybe Lee should have said that you can potentially get into a problem when you disagree with his position.

*The article in The New York Times compares what Coca-Cola is doing with GEBN with a well-documented strategy employed by tobacco companies: paying for health experts to create doubt about the health hazards of smoking.*

So James, in your desperation you finally tried "Guilt by Association." Well, since you've produced zero evidence to support even a single accusation ... what other options do you have but implications and innuendo?

*With the prevalence of obesity and sugary drinks in the US, arrangements such as the one between Coca-Cola and GEBN cannot but appear problematic.*

James, near the beginning of your article, you wrote:

*"the practice of industry funding science is nothing new. It costs a lot of money to conduct scientific research, and many researchers - in the fields of medicine and technology, as well as nutrition - are funded through grants from corporations that are directly associated with the area of research."*

James, how is it that you can't see the contradiction between your earlier statement ... and this one?

*While many policy-making groups are looking to reduce the rate at which such beverages are consumed, the existence of scientific research arguing that sugary drinks are not hazardous to health will prove to be a stumbling block.*

James, then you need to refute inaccurate scientific research. But if this article is any example of how you plan on going about doing that, then you might be in some trouble. You may be able to convince the ignorant masses with propaganda, but the scientists will be harder to fool; and as you just admitted, there exists a lot of scientific research that didn't go the way you had hoped; and all you offered in the way of a refutation was innuendo, guilt by association, a contradiction, and a logical fallacy.

*Consuming small amounts of sugary drinks from time to time will not necessarily harm an individual,*

James, what do you mean "necessarily?" Do you have evidence that small amounts can harm an individual or not?

*but repeated messages suggesting that such drinks are fine and that exercise is more important could have a long-lasting effect on public health.*

James, if you are wrong, then those effects might be beneficial. After all, those messages worked pretty well ...

before the obesity epidemic.

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/298062.php>

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

THE SCIENCE SEGMENT

Clearance of Alzheimer's protein in the brain reduces with age

Myloid beta 42 is the main ingredient of the protein plaques that clog up the brain in Alzheimer's disease. After the age of 65, the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease doubles every 5 years.

Researchers found that people in their 30's typically take about 4 hours to clear half the amyloid beta 42 from the brain. At over 80 years old, it takes more than 10 hours. If it is not cleared away, there is a higher chance that amyloid beta 42 - a protein fragment that is a natural by-product of brain activity - will clump into plaques that disrupt brain functions, such as communication between cells.

Dementia is a progressive condition where memory, thinking and behavior deteriorate until it is no longer possible to have a conversation and look after oneself. Although the condition mainly affects older people, it is NOT a normal part of aging.

There are around 48 million people worldwide with dementia, and this figure is rising by nearly 8 million each year. Alzheimer's disease contributes to around two-thirds of these cases.

Lower rates of amyloid beta 42 clearance - such as those the researchers saw in the older participants - were linked to symptoms of Alzheimer's disease, including memory impairment, personality changes, and dementia.

Scientists believe that the brain has 4 channels for disposing of amyloid beta: moving it into the spine, forcing it through the blood-brain barrier, dissolving or absorbing it with other proteins, or depositing it as plaques.

Researchers hope to identify which of the first 3 channels for amyloid beta disposal are slowing down as the brain ages.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

FAMOUS QUOTES

Kevin Doran (1953-) 62 years old

He earned a doctorate in philosophy and went on to become the Roman Catholic Bishop of Elphin, Ireland.

"There is nothing stopping gay people from getting married,

as long as they don’t marry each other."