

Microbiologist fights germophobia, microbiome hype

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

Microbiologist Jonathan Eisen has a knack for really annoying his fellow scientists.

He calls them out for overhyping their findings, or for inviting [too few women](#) to speak on panels, or for choosing to publish research in prestigious journals available only to subscribers instead of open-access publications. His crusading spirit knows no boundaries: Eisen once bestowed a “Genomic Jerk” award on himself for getting his facts wrong in a blog post.

All this, plus a playful [social media presence](#), has earned Eisen a reputation as one of the most influential life science researchers on Twitter.

But what he really wants is to use that megaphone to help people understand bugs.

From an office crammed with lemur skulls, tubeworm shells, and dusty boxes of dead butterflies, Eisen aims to promote public understanding of [the microbiome](#), the vast assortment of microbes that live in and all around us. Bacteria, he points out, are [ubiquitous](#) — in people’s guts, on their skin, and in every environment. They can cause infections and disease, but they are also essential to [health and life](#).

On one side, there is widespread germophobia — the fear that “there are germs everywhere, microbes on McDonald’s play structures, and we’re all going to die,” he said. “On the other hand,” he said, “we have the other end of the spectrum, which I call microbiomania — [the belief] that all microbes are good and will magically cure all your ailments.”

Read full, original post: [This microbiologist loves bugs, hates hype — and wants you to send him your cat’s poop](#)