

## Viewpoint: Leading agricultural biotechnology critic Paul Thacker morphs into anti-vaccine propagandist

It's been a while since I've written about [Paul Thacker](#), the formerly legitimate investigative journalist who squandered his reputation by going anti-GMO conspiracy theorist and taking to [harassing scientists](#) in the name of "transparency." Basically, Thacker takes what is normally a good thing, skepticism and suspicion of the motives of large corporations, beyond reason to the realm of conspiracy. He then generalized that to big pharma, which led him to vaccines. Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit two and a half years ago, he's predictably turned to attacking science communicators who promote vaccination as "[vaccine cheerleaders](#)."

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Most recently, he published [an "investigative exposé" in \*The BMJ\*](#) of the phase 3 randomized clinical trial that led to the emergency use authorization (EUA) of the Pfizer mRNA-based COVID-19 vaccine based on the report of a single "Pfizer whistleblower" named Brook Jackson, who had briefly been briefly employed at [Ventavia Research Group](#), one of the contract research organizations ([CROs](#)) contracted by Pfizer to help it run its massive trial. Ventavia ran three Pfizer clinical trial sites in Texas (out of 153 total sites), and Thacker used Jackson's account to accuse it of sloppy research practices, unblinding of patients, and even outright data falsification, which is scientific fraud. Unfortunately, as several sources, including this blog, pointed out, Thacker's charges were poorly supported and unproven allegations were generalized to the entire Pfizer clinical trial in a manner designed to cast doubt on whether its COVID-19 vaccine is truly safe and effective.

This brings me to an article published last week on Thacker's Substack—because of course his blog is on [Substack](#), which has become a [profitable home](#) to cranks, quacks, antivaxxers, COVID-19 pandemic minimizers, conspiracy theorists, and grifters of all stripes—entitled [Vaccines Are Magic](#). Longtime readers will immediately recognize that title as being an antivax trope, but in case you didn't, I note that the blurb reads: *Current social conventions allow disparagement of drugs and devices, but critique a vaccine ... good night, and good luck*. Gee...where have I heard this narrative before?

... Thacker basically proclaims that criticizing vaccines brings the wrath of the pharma gods down upon you because "vaccines are magic." Again, longtime readers will recognize that this phrase has commonly been used by a lot of antivaxxers.

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Thacker received a BS in Biology, with an emphasis in Ecology/Evolution, from the University of California

Thacker has decided that it's ideology and the belief that vaccines are so magic that you can never speak ill of them even in the slightest that is behind the criticism, a charge that he gets to after listing laudatory stories about his BMJ story....

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in his article Thacker explicitly likened COVID-19 vaccines to “magic” and “religion” that cannot be criticized because the powerful pharma priesthood will not permit it and uses his experience being criticized for his BMJ report, as well as the experiences of others, to support that narrative. He can deny being antivaccine all he likes—and maybe he even believes that he isn't antivaccine—but this particular narrative is an antivaccine trope that goes back to long before I ever started paying attention to the antivaccine movement (and I've been at this for over 20 years).

**[This is an excerpt. Read the original post here](#)**