

Podcast and video: GE chestnut tree coming soon? Tylenol doesn't cause autism; Damar Hamlin-COVID vaccine controversy

After years of delay, a genetically engineered chestnut tree may finally receive USDA approval. Is it headed for a new home in America's Appalachian forests? There's no evidence that Tylenol causes autism, but that hasn't stopped lawyers from filing lawsuits claiming it does. Did an mRNA COVID shot cause Damar Hamlin's cardiac arrest? As of now, there is no evidence to support that speculation.

Join geneticist Kevin Folta and GLP contributor Cameron English on episode 200 of Science Facts and Fallacies as they break down these latest news stories:

- [Biotech chestnut tree poised to restore lost ecosystems and biodiversity — But it needs your help](#)

After many years of research and regulatory review, a blight-resistant, genetically engineered chestnut tree known as [Darling 58](#) is poised to receive final approval from the USDA. The project was designed to reestablish the American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*), which dominated Appalachian forests for many years until a deadly fungal infection all but wiped out the tree in the last century. It was a key species that supported significant biological diversity; reviving the chestnut could yield the same environmental benefits today. What hurdles remain in the way of success, and when will scientists actually begin planting these biotech trees?

- [Analysis: Acetaminophen linked to autism? Claims about the causes of this behavioral disease get weirder as scientists hone in on genes as driving culprit](#)

We've all taken Tylenol for minor aches and pains without a second thought. It's one of the only pain relievers women can safely consume during pregnancy, and that, sadly, has made acetaminophen, the active ingredient, a target for opportunistic trial lawyers. All it took was a single study suggesting that [children exposed to Tylenol during pregnancy](#) were 19% more likely to have autism spectrum disorders compared to non-exposed children and the litigants were off to the races. The story underscores the fact that our legal system is routinely abused, forced to serve as a venue in which bad science gets an unjustified hearing.

- [Anti-vaxxers, COVID conspiracists, FOX's Tucker Carlson and the far right link vaccines to NFL player Damar Hamlin's cardiac arrest](#)

During a January 2 contest against the Cincinnati Bengals, Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin collapsed after tackling a wide receiver. Experts suspect Hamlin went into cardiac as a result of [commotio cordis](#), a rare but potentially fatal condition characterized by a blunt impact to the chest. First responders probably saved Hamlin's life by administering CPR and automated external defibrillation (AED). He [was discharged](#) on January 11, following a nine-day hospital stay. Some political commentators capitalized on the

situation to attack the mRNA COVID-19 vaccines, though Hamlin's vaccination status [is unknown](#) and his medical history has not been released to the public.

Kevin M. Folta is a professor, keynote speaker and podcast host. Follow Professor Folta on Twitter [@kevinfolta](#)

Cameron J. English is the director of bio-sciences at the [American Council on Science and Health](#). Visit [his website](#) and follow ACSH on Twitter [@ACSHorg](#)