

Podcast: A scientist alerted a journal that an article was based on cherry-picked data. Its 'response' illustrates the challenges in counteracting disinformation

Scientists are encouraged to step into the public conversation around controversial work, especially when that work seems to deliberately misinform, and can negatively affect public health.

A series of authors have used the COVID pandemic to use the peer-reviewed literature to push claims that are poorly supported by legitimate evidence. These papers find favorable review from poor-quality reviewers, leading to eventual publication, and earning the patina of legitimacy, despite the poor quality of the work.

Dr. Lonni Besançon and an expert team responded to a paper online that presented no original research—just a hypothesis that is supported by cherry picked data to support a conclusion. The team wrote a response to the journal, which was peer reviewed prior to publication, yet the journal still declined to print it.

This conversation shows that the claims of silencing and censorship are not stopping bad information— but we can identify cases where efforts to correct the information are rejected.

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