GLP podcast: Neuralink chip in your brain? CNN's bunk COVID booster headline; Obesity drugs—the long-term effects

Neuralink has successfully implanted its "brain–computer interface" in a human patient. Elon Musk says the results so far are "promising." What does that mean exactly? CNN recently exaggerated the risk of COVID boosters, undermining efforts to quell groundless fears about the shots. Weight-loss drugs Ozempic and Wegovy have proven to be both effective and popular, but critics say these pharmaceuticals raise serious ethical concerns that must be addressed.

Podcast:

Join hosts Dr. Liza Dunn and GLP contributor Cameron English on episode 253 of Science Facts and Fallacies as they break down these latest news stories:

- **Elon Musk's Neuralink implanted in a human, who is recovering well, billionaire tweets**

Incendiary billionaire Elon Musk says his goal with Neuralink is to "achieve a symbiosis with artificial intelligence" using implantable brain–computer interfaces. In essence, the company aims to implant chips in people's brains so they can operate computers with their thoughts. Widespread use of this technology is a long way off, but Neuralink's coin-sized microchip, known as "Telepathy," could sooner improve the lives of quadriplegics, patients who experience paralysis in all four limbs. One individual has already received the implant, and Musk says the next step is a six-year clinical trial to determine if the product is a viable long-term treatment.

- **Another lesson from the news coverage of COVID: How poorly-written headlines can adversely impact the lives of readers**

The media routinely misreport scientific facts to the public. But even when news stories are more or less correct, their headlines can still be misleading—a serious issue since so many people only read headlines. CNN published a case study late last year in a story reporting a rare risk associated with COVID and flu vaccines in the elderly. The article rightly reported that fewer than three people out of 100,000 experienced stroke after receiving both shots—an exceedingly low incidence rate. However, the story's title implied that the COVID booster significantly increased the risk of stroke for older patients. Moral of the story? Headline writers should read the article before composing its title.

- **Viewpoint: Weight loss drug boom raises host of unaddressed ethical and scientific questions**

Initially developed as treatments for type 2 diabetes, Ozempic and Wegovy are now widely used as

effective interventions for obesity. The same active ingredient in both drugs regulates the effects of two hormones, insulin and glucagon, reducing appetite and slowing digestion. Patients feel “full” for longer and consume fewer calories as a result. But these blockbuster drugs have come under scrutiny from critics who say they’re too expensive, aggressively marketed and unable to treat the underlying causes of obesity. Just how worried should we be?

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