Rodale Institute: Hub of organic movement also supports “quack” health, anti-GMO activism

The Rodale Institute is the non-profit arm of Rodale, Inc. with whom it shares common board members and staff. Rodale, led by CEO Maria Rodale, is convinced that organic farming “can change the world. … No other single choice you can make to improve the health of your family and the planet will have greater positive repercussions for our future,” she has claimed.

The privately held for-profit Rodale publishing empire with estimated annual sales exceeding $160 million in 2009[1] includes a book unit and periodical titles like Men’s Health, Organic Gardening, and Runner’s World. Rodale also operates the Rodale Family Foundation which is a contributor to various organic advocacy causes. Rodale frequently solicits and publishes anti-GMO commentaries, research and issues analysis. The Rodale Institute and Rodale Family Foundation remain closely tied to the for-profit Rodale, Inc. publishing which is their primary financial sponsor.

The publishing empire has published Organic Manifesto: How Organic Food Can Heal Our Planet, Feed the World and Keep Us Safe (Rodale Books), from which the above quote is drawn. “There’s so many benefits that come from that one choice,” Rodale told Marc Gunther in a 2011 interview. “You’ve removed a bejillion pounds of dangerous, synthetic, disease-causing environment-destroying chemicals from the soil, the water our bodies. We would all immediately be healthier. Our children would be healthier.”

Farmers and their families and farm workers would be better off, too, she goes on: “And our kids would be smarter. There are actually studies that show that a lot of these chemicals do reduce intelligence.” The book cites no studies or mainstream experts to support her claims.

Rodale holds the patent since 1999 for the Institute for Blended Medicine, an alternative approach to healing viewed as quack medicine by Quackwatch. Rodale published a book Blended Medicine: The Best Choice in Healing in 2000, which profiles “healing arts” and promotes “alternative” and “holistic” therapies, including “naturopathy” and “biofeedback”—practices considered quack science by mainstream medicine. James Gordon, director of the Center for Mind-Body Medicine and author of Manifesto for a New Medicine, called the book “Comprehensive, clear, and eminently helpful.”

HISTORY

The Rodale empire was founded in 1930 by Jerome Irving Rodale “out of a concern for soil depletion and nutrient loss.” He founded Prevention and Organic Gardening magazines and set up Rodale, Inc. to run them. (His daughter Maria now runs that company.) Maria has served as an advisory board member to the Center for Food Safety and Organic Consumers Association. The Institute promotes itself as a mild-mannered organic-food research organization, but through the publishing arm its influence is felt far beyond ag extension classes and practical farming.

Jerome Irving Rodale died in 1990 during an appearance on the Dick Cavett show, during which he had
just bragged about his good health, the result he claimed of eating organic eating foods. He said: “I never felt better in my life!” and “I’ve decided to live to be 100”. Only 72 years old, he then collapsed of a heart attack on stage, and died.

Whereas Rodale’s initial mission was to convince farmers to convert to organic methods, today it’s more oriented to convincing consumers to demand organic end-products. Hence Rodale’s never-ending string of high-school science education programs and its “Farming Systems Trial” program. This Rodale operation compares growing systems side-by-side, and is the only such trial to consistently declare that organic has higher yields and performs better in drought conditions.

Former board chairman, the late Robert Rodale, who was editor and publisher of *Prevention* magazine, was the brainchild behind the People’s Medical Society, launched in 1983 with the announced intention of helping people become better medical consumers. In 1983, Rodale Press provided start-up funds and hired Charles K. Inlander as executive director.

According to *Quackwatch*, during the 1980s, PMS encouraged its members to write to legislators or other officials. Some campaigns involved antiquackery legislation (opposed by PMS), funds for organic farming (favored), licensing of nutritionists (opposed), and food irradiation (opposed).

Until its demise in 2004, PMS produced many books, booklets, reading lists, and other special reports. Some contain valuable information, but others promote unscientific methods and/or portray them as equivalent to scientific ones, among them:

- uncritically promoting the unscientific theories and practices of acupuncture, acupressure, traditional Chinese medicine, chiropractic, homeopathy, hydrotherapy, metabolic therapy, naturopathy, orthomolecular therapy, psychic healing, and reflexology.
- suggesting that unorthodox practitioners be allowed to practice with minimal government regulation.
- advised that obtaining a health-related degree through a correspondence course “does not in and of itself imply an inferior education.”
- Its 1995 book *The Consumers Medical Desk Reference* stated that many alternative cancer therapies “rather than treating the symptoms of cancer—the tumor . . . attempt to treat the cause, be it faulty physical health or spiritual well-being.” This viewpoint is pure rubbish (notes Quackwatch)
- Its newsletter, published bimonthly until 2002, occasionally contained useful suggestions, but most of its information was slanted to encourage members to distrust science-based practitioners and regard them as adversaries.

**ORGANIZATION**

Rodale Institute

611 Siegfriedale Rd, Kutztown, PA 19530

EIN: 23-7206884
CAMPAIGNS / ACTIVITIES
In an effort to promote organic interests, Rodales has published and sponsored dozens of anti-GMO commentaries and “research” claims that GMOs are unsafe, harm the environment and are socially irresponsible[2], [3]

**KEY PEOPLE**

- Maria Rodale, president and CEO
- Elaine Ingham, Chief Scientist – Ingham also is a teacher at the Maharishi Institute for Management and resident of Fairfield, IA.[4]
- Anthony Rodale, chairman emeritus & board director – Rodale is also co-founder of the Sustainable Food Association which funds Gilles-Eric Seralini’s discredited anti-GMO, anti-pesticide research.[5]
- Elizabeth Kucinich, board director – Kucinich is policy director for the anti-GMO Center for Food Safety and director/producer of Jeffrey M. Smith’s movie Genetic Roulette.
- Roberta Lang, board director – Lang is general counsel to Whole Foods Market
- Grant Lundberg, board director – president of Lunberg Family Organic Farms
- Mark Smallwood, executive director
- Maya Rodale, board director (daughter of Maria Rodale)

**FUNDING SOURCES**

- Rodale Family Foundation
- Rodale, Inc
- Organic Valley
- Nature’s Path Organic
- Government grants (reported $330,000 in 2013)

**AFFILIATIONS**

- QUIET CREEK HERB FARM located at the Rodale Institue
- The Sustainable Food Alliance and the Sustainable Food Trust

**CRITICISMS**

- Mark Lynas has cited Rodale content as a source for anti-GMO conspiracy theories.[8]

**RESOURCES**
REFERENCES

2 http://rodaleinstitute.org/tag/gmo/ while simultaneously promoting GMO-free offerings of their funders and advertisers to their for-profit publishing arms.http://www.organicvalley.coop/about-us/our-partners/rodale/about/
3 http://www.rodalenews.com/gmo-omg-documentary
4 http://greeniowa.org/node/74
5 https://geneticliteracyproject.org/2015/06/18/organic-industry-and-other-funders-behind-seralinis-anti-gmo-studies/
7 http://www.bizapedia.com/people/PENNSYLVANIA/ALLENTOWN/RODALE-ANTHONY.html