

The Center for Media and Democracy strengthens participatory democracy by investigating and exposing public relations spin and propaganda, and by promoting media literacy and citizen journalism.

CMD provides in-depth reporting on PRWatch.org about corporate spin, government propaganda and the role of PR firms in polluting our information environment. On our SourceWatch.org site, we provide a platform for collaborative research and reporting on the individuals, organizations, and issues shaping the public agenda. Following are highlights from recent months.

CMD Continues to Hound the Pentagon Pundits

CMD staffers have been at the forefront of both making the Pentagon pundit program documents accessible to the public, and of analyzing the content. CMD's IT staff was able to make all 8,000 pages of Pentagon documents text-searchable, so anyone can look up

how, when, and in what context specific people, news outlets, and concepts are mentioned. (Go to www.SourceWatch.org and search for "Pentagon military analyst program: Documents" to find them). CMD intern Daniel Haack wrote a detailed article titled "Jed Babbin: The Pentagon's Most Prolific Pundit." As Haack explained, Babbin "didn't just use Pentagon public affairs staffers as his radio bookers. He also asked them for their thoughts on what he should say, as a pundit." It's available at www.PRWatch.org/node/7677.

Senior Researcher Diane Farsetta also waded into the documents. She pored through the documents to see what there was on two pro-war front groups that CMD has tracked since their founding — America Supports You and Move America Forward. Go to www.PRWatch.org/node/7645 to see what she found.

Netroots Nation's Aims for its Annual Meeting

CMD Executive Director John Stauber analyzed what would — and wouldn't — be happening at the Netroots Nation convention in Austin, TX, in July. Funded in large part by MoveOn, the gathering was not meant to show the diverse of views on the Left. Instead, Stauber submits, "The singular goal of the Netroots Nation in Austin is to emphasize unity and help win control of the White House come November." You can read more and see who the featured speakers were at www.PRWatch.org/node/7562.

The Real Issue with the Anthrax Suicide Case

In the wake of Bruce E. Ivins' suicide and the announcement that he was responsible for the Anthrax attacks of 2001, there was a lot of speculation about the strength of the government's case. Research Director Sheldon Rampton uses a piece by Glenn Greenwald to sort through the arguments, and to point out that the government needs to reveal their secret sources to prove its case. Read it at www.prwatch.org/node/7623.



Why Voluntary Codes Don't Work

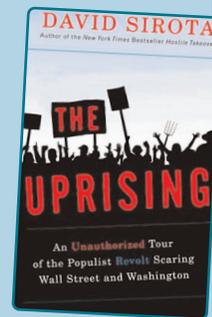
TobaccoWiki Editor Anne Landman wrote an article on voluntary corporate codes of conduct, and why they don't work. She explains, "Voluntary corporate codes were born out of corporate misbehavior that resulted in public relations disasters. In the early 1970s, the public learned that the American transnational conglomerate, International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT), had played a significant and hidden role in overthrowing a democratically-elected government, the new government of Chile's Salvador Allende." Originally published by CorpWatch, a version of the article is available at www.PRWatch.org/node/7724.

Protesting Positive Spin on Coal

SourceWatch Editor Bob Burton wrote a piece about upcoming protests against the E.ON coal-fired Kingsnorth Power Station in the UK. The Edelman Public Relations firm has been retained by E.ON to counter protests, which are particularly embarrassing for a company that touts itself as socially responsible. "Like so many companies, E.ON UK gushes about its corporate social responsibility program and proclaims that it is 'working towards low carbon energy' and that 'climate change is an important issue for society.'" "Edelman Likes It Hot," is available at www.PRWatch.org/node/7614.

An Interview with David Sirota

John Stauber spoke to political activist, columnist and author David Sirota about his new book, *The Uprising: An Unauthorized Tour of the Populist Revolt Scaring Wall Street and Washington*. Sirota described the Democratic Party leadership's refusal to take a courageous stance in 2007 against the Iraq War like this: "America watched a Democratic Party kick them square in the teeth - all in order to continue the most unpopular war in a generation at the request of the most unpopular president in a generation at a time polls show a larger percentage of the public thinks America is going in the wrong direction than ever recorded in polling history. You can read the whole interview at www.PRWatch.org/node/7523.



CMD In the News

- Executive Director John Stauber debated MoveOn.org Executive Director Eli Pariser on its role in the anti-war movement on KQED radio's Forum with Michael Krasny in August 2008.

- Associate Director Judith Siers-Poisson was a guest on the Canadian Broadcasting Company's Sunday Edition program on September 7, 2008. The panel discussed the Gardasil vaccine, and why there are good reasons to slow the stampede toward school-based HPV vaccination programs in Canada. Judith was also a guest on the Thom Hartmann show on Air America on September 11, 2008, with guest host Lee Rayburn to talk about new developments on the HPV issue.

- Senior Researcher Diane Farsetta was quoted in the September 22, 2008 issue of the Guardian (UK). In the article about astroturf groups (fake grassroots groups that in fact are set up by and support industry, and are often created by PR firms), she says that professional PR bodies have ethics codes that "look good on paper. However, those ethics policies are never enforced by, for example, rescinding the membership of professionals or firms that break them, even if they break them repeatedly."

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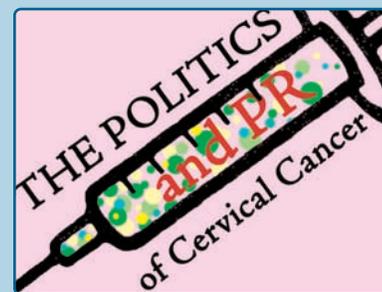
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Thank you!

The HPV Vaccine Debate Continues

by Judith Siers-Poisson

This is an excerpt from the article "The Gardasil HPV Vaccine: Not the Shot in the Arm Merck Hoped for," which is available in its entirety at www.PRWatch.org/node/7748.



With the start of the school year, debate has heated up again about Gardasil, Merck's vaccine against human papillomavirus (HPV). Since writing my series of four articles last year on "The Politics and PR of Cervical Cancer," I have noticed some interesting trends. While Gardasil has not been the financial jackpot that Merck was hoping it would be, there is still a steady push for vaccination and even still for mandates.

Despite its corner on the market, Merck is not making as much on Gardasil as previously planned. Forbes reported on September 12, 2008 that "Merck has already scaled back full-year sales estimates for Gardasil from between \$1.9 billion and \$2.1 billion to between \$1.4 billion and \$1.6 billion, following regulatory setbacks and challenges making inroads with young adult patients." Despite these setbacks, Merck continues to profit from Gardasil's monopoly status as the only FDA-approved vaccine for HPV on the U.S. market. It appears that they will have the market cornered longer than expected. GlaxoSmithKline's competing vaccine, Cervarix, was submitted to the FDA in March 2007 but has not yet been approved. Instead, the agency sent GSK a Complete Response Letter in December, 2007 asking for more information.

In June 2008, GSK announced that they had provided follow up information to the FDA in response to the December letter, but they also made clear that there were tests in progress whose results they felt were critical to FDA approval. Those tests are scheduled to run through 2008, which means that GSK will not submit its findings to the FDA until early 2009, after which another six months at least will be needed before the FDA can make a decision on approval. Merck can therefore count on having the only dog in the fight for at least one more year.

Open Mouth, Insert Foot . . .



The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) has issued a news release calling on the presidential campaigns of John McCain and Barack Obama to "uphold the highest standards of ethical practice in every facet of their campaign communications." PRSA CEO Jeffrey Julin is offering himself for interviews as "a recognized expert in communications ethics." Since assuming the helm of the PRSA in January, Julin has been trying to improve the industry's ethical reputation. In June, he posted a platitudinous statement on YouTube in response to a sarcastic CBS news commentary about Scott McClellan's book on his misadventures as a Bush administration spokesman. Julin is also president of MGA Communications, a PR firm whose clients include Americans for Balanced Energy Choices, a front group for the coal industry that is "targeting the public, politicians, interest groups, and the media" during this year's election campaign as part of what the Washington Post called a "\$35 million campaign in primary and caucus states to rally public support for coal-fired electricity and to fuel opposition to legislation that Congress is crafting to slow climate change."

August saw a flurry of news stories and medical journal articles that cast serious doubt on the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of vaccinating women later in life. The August 21, 2008 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine* (NEJM) carried both an editorial and a lengthy study on HPV vaccines.

Even in the best-case scenario, HPV vaccines would only prevent 70% of cervical cancer cases, which means that regular and consistent screening, such as tried and true Pap smears, will remain critical for women's protection against cervical cancer. This means that the significant costs of the three shot initial Gardasil vaccination series (with a price tag of \$450-\$1,000, not including a possible booster) will be in addition to the existing costs of screening.

On August 21, 2008, the *New York Times* published an article titled "Researchers Question Wide Use of HPV Vaccines," which quoted extensively from the NEJM. The *Times* article emphasized a key point: Since cervical cancer grows slowly there is no hard evidence yet that an HPV vaccine will actually lower the rate of cervical cancer. The vaccines can prevent some HPV infections that may lead eventually to cervical cancer if not diagnosed and treated. However, the tests have not lasted long enough yet to say definitively that the result will actually translate into a real decrease in cervical cancer.

That is quite a bombshell, and certainly a different message than Merck's marketing blitz has encouraged the public to embrace. Merck and its supporters would have you believe that time is of the essence and that society must move quickly to ensure that every young girl gets vaccinated. The main beneficiary of this hurry-up approach is Merck, not women and girls.

Judith joined CMD in November 2005. In her role as Associate Director, she works closely with Executive Director John Stauber in both managing and raising funds for CMD.

Since 1996 she has done development work for several non-profit organizations, including the Wisconsin Coordinating Council on Nicaragua, Domestic Abuse Intervention Services, and the Wisconsin Historical Foundation. In 2005, she earned Certified Fundraising Executive status, demonstrating both



her commitment to and proficiency in the fundraising field. "Most people would rather face a root canal without novacaine than fundraise," she jokes. "I think of it very differently. To ask someone to donate to CMD is really to offer people the chance to be part of the good work going on."

None of Judith's colleagues can figure out how she gives so much to CMD and yet does so much in her free time. She loves traveling and studying languages. She is fluent in French, has studied Russian language and history extensively, and is trying to learn Arabic. She has visited over 25 countries on five continents and lived in Moscow, Russia for a year during her graduate studies. Indeed, her family is international; she married a skilled French translator, Jean-Marc, and together with daughter Ariane they love spending time in France with her in-laws.

Judith volunteers extensively. She is a board member of the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, one of the nation's leading non-partisan election reform groups. She is not only adept at fundraising and management, but she is also an investigator and journalist who for eight years has hosted a one-hour, live, call-in interview program on WORT radio in Madison. With CMD colleague Diane Farsetta, she writes, voices, and produces CMD's Weekly

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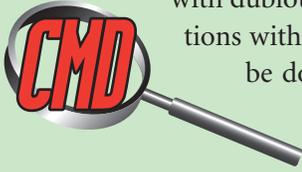
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Radio Spin, now aired by a more than fifteen radio stations and available as a podcast. Judith has written articles for PRWatch.org, including a major, groundbreaking series in 2007 on "The Politics and PR of Cervical Cancer." For all this and more she was given the Sally Sunde Award for Social Justice from Community Shares of Wisconsin.

Judith thrives on challenge and is constantly excelling and growing both personally and professionally. "To work for CMD and to do so in Madison has been a dream come true," she says.

The Center for Media and Democracy Announces the Election Protection Wiki

As the world learned in 2000 and 2004, the very integrity of the voting process in the United States has come under suspicion with dubious outcomes. Fair and honest elections with properly counted results that can be documented and trusted are essential to democracy. But can we really trust the results today? Who is watchdogging elections at the local, state and national level? Will hanging chads and unaccountable electronic machines determine the outcome of the 2008 vote?



To help answer these questions, and to play a role in improving the process, we at the Center for Media and Democracy will soon be launching a new project: our Election Protection portal. Thanks to funding from the Tides Foundation, this exciting new venture will be housed on our SourceWatch.org wiki-based site, so will encourage widespread participation. Watch for its launch in the weeks ahead.

SourceWatch, our online encyclopedia of the people, organizations and issues shaping the public agenda, will soon become a

clearing house of vital current information, research and reports for examining the US election process. The new Election Protection portal will be a key “first stop” online resource for information about election officials, polling places, procedures and regulations.

We’re hoping to meet an urgent need. There has never to our knowledge been a central repository for this information, certainly not one that harnesses citizen journalism and the benefits of wiki collaboration to stay up to date and accurate. The lack of such a web site has been a serious hindrance to understanding and responding to problems on Election Day and to reforming voting procedures before the next election.

Many organizations and individuals are working across the United States to protect our right to vote and the integrity of the electoral process. In the weeks ahead we will be drawing attention to their work and pulling it together in one portal in Sourcewatch. Go to SourceWatch.org and there will be a link to the Election Protection portal in the list of current portal pages. Join us in our election protection efforts!



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