

AIDS Denialists Lie About More than HIV: Deception and Duplicity among the “Dissidents”

By the AIDStruth.org Team

HIV denialists boast that they oppose the science-driven “AIDS orthodoxy,” and many people who distrust medicine find this self-ascribed rebel stance appealing. But the denialists paradoxically idealize the very “establishment” they claim to reject. This is manifested in a striking pattern of exaggerations and outright lies from denialists about their institutional positions, scientific qualifications, and publications, and their false and often fraudulent claims of support from legitimate scientists and doctors. Some of these lies are symptoms of denialists’ delusions that they are knowledgeable and important, while others are part of a systematic effort to deceive a vulnerable public. In both cases, the denialists’ lies about themselves are a dimension of their lies about HIV and AIDS.

It is understandable that HIV denialists long for the credibility and expertise associated with real credentials. Intensive training, academic and institutional oversight, and extensive, specialized experience in infectious diseases, virology, pharmacology, epidemiology and related fields are crucial to understanding HIV and AIDS and developing effective strategies for prevention and treatment. Ironically, by pretending to have expertise and respect that they lack, the denialists implicitly acknowledge this.

Although scientific research and clinical experience tested the theories and produced the evidence that HIV is the cause of AIDS, the struggle for effective prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS has not been the exclusive domain of scientists and doctors, the so-called “AIDS Establishment.” The tremendous advances in fighting HIV and AIDS have depended on self-taught activists and ordinary people living with HIV as well as on professionals. The partnerships among experts, advocates and people with HIV/AIDS, though sometimes contentious, have increased access to new medications in clinical trials, empowered patients, and increased medical and pharmacological accountability. The movement against the AIDS epidemic has been from its inception the most powerful, diverse and successful force for the rights of affected people in medicine in American history. The denialists’ foundational lie is their claim that there is an “AIDS orthodoxy” in the first place.

AIDStruth presents here small sample of the denialists’ lies and misrepresentations about who they are and what they have done.

1. HIV Denialists Exaggerate Their Credentials

Andrew Maniotis misrepresents himself as a professor and a pathologist

Andrew Maniotis is one of the few working biologists active in HIV denialism. He has a Ph.D. in cell biology and so is perhaps the most academically credentialed of the ultra-denialists who claim that HIV has never been proven to exist, a bizarre position associated with the so-called “Perth Group.” Maniotis was once an assistant professor on a tenure track, but he was not tenured after his sixth year and was demoted to a

more junior, non-tenure-track position (“Research Assistant Professor”) at the University of Illinois, Chicago.¹

In 2005—after he was denied tenure—Maniotis wrote a letter to denialist Christine Maggiore about her daughter’s death from AIDS- related pneumonia, in which he twice gave himself the title “Professor of Pathology” at the Medical School at UIC. He was flatly lying about his position: Maniotis was not then, and is not now, a Professor, an Associate Professor, or even a tenure-track Assistant Professor. This was no simple mistake: no one in the rigidly hierarchical world of the university could ever accidentally misuse the title “Professor.” Furthermore, Maniotis has no medical training and therefore he could not be certified as a pathologist, nor does his work at the University of Illinois involve reviewing pathology specimens. Yet in the same letter he posed as a pathologist, claimed that he analyzes many autopsy reports every week, and pretended to be qualified to evaluate fellow denialist Al-Bayati’s post-mortem diagnosis-for-hire pathology report:

November 21st 2005

Dear Ms. Maggiore:

As a Professor of Pathology at the University of Illinois at Chicago, one of the nation’s largest medical schools, I analyze many similar reports in the course of a single week.

From my experience in this area, I find Al-Bayati’s report on Eliza Jane Scovill to be one of the most thorough and well-studied investigations I have ever reviewed. If more pathologists used Al Bayati’s same logical and scientific methodology, I believe there would be little need for inquests, charges of medical malpractice and fraud, and certainly less medical error in autopsies, diagnosis, treatment, and critical care practices.²

(irrelevant text deleted)

I believe Al-Bayati’s analysis and report represents the state of the art in terms of methodology, completeness, and accuracy, and serves as a textbook model of how to conduct a differential diagnosis.

Andrew Maniotis, PhD.

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Department of Pathology, Anatomy and Cell Biology, and Bioengineering,

University of Illinois at Chicago, USA³

Misrepresenting one’s position is a serious offense in academic circles. More dangerous is that Maniotis regularly claims to be an expert on subjects with which he has no professional familiarity, including not only HIV/AIDS but also differential diagnoses and vaccine safety. He represents himself as a brilliant and successful polymath, but the hard reality is very different.

Mohammed Al-Bayati misrepresents himself as a qualified pathologist

Dr. Mohammed Al-Bayati is an HIV denialist who sits on the Advisory Board of Christine Maggiore’s organization, Alive and Well. After Maggiore’s three-year-old daughter, Eliza Jane Scovill, died in May, 2005, a team of coroners determined that the child had died of AIDS-related pneumonia, displayed signs of HIV encephalitis and had HIV Gag proteins in her brain tissue.⁴ Understandably distraught and perhaps

¹ Documents from the Board of Trustees, University of Illinois, Chicago.

² Maniotis’s curious claim that Al-Bayati’s methodology, which is premised on manufacturing data for malpractice cases and inquests, would, if used by other pathologists, result in “little need for inquests, charges of medical malpractice and fraud,” etc., is sadly beyond the scope of this article.

³ <http://justiceforej.com/>

⁴ Ms. Maggiore has claimed to have received negative, positive and indeterminate HIV antibody tests results in

psychologically unable to acknowledge that her adamant refusal to provide proper medical care for her children had resulted in her daughter's unnecessary death, Maggiore hired Al-Bayati to invent an alternative cause. Reframing facts presented in the coroner's report—by law he could not perform an autopsy himself because he is unqualified and uncredentialed—Al-Bayati claimed, erroneously, that the child had died of an allergic reaction to a common antibiotic.⁵

Al-Bayati, like anyone else, is free to make such a statement, but he is simply not professionally qualified to do so. He has a PhD, but not a medical degree; therefore, like Maniotis, he does not qualify for certification as a pathologist and could not be licensed to perform autopsies.⁶ Rather, Dr. Al-Bayati is certified as an animal and human toxicologist and as such he is presumably familiar with some of the techniques of pathology from his graduate training. But Dr. Al-Bayati deceptively presents himself as a pathologist and, for a hundred dollars an hour⁷ develops alternative theories of injury and illness for clients, and reviews autopsy reports and offers “differential diagnoses” for defendants in legal cases involving children's deaths. His autopsy reviews typically find that the young victims died not from shaken baby syndrome or AIDS, but from some sort of medical malpractice, such as untreated diabetes, or reactions to vaccines, steroids, or antibiotics. Since he questions the basic facts of the HIV/AIDS paradigm, it is not clear how he could ever agree with an autopsy finding that HIV-related illness is the cause of a death.

The “Perth Group”: Eleni Papadopulos-Eleopulos and Valendar Turner misrepresent themselves as experts on HIV/AIDS

Three or four HIV denialists in Australia who call themselves “the Perth Group” deny that HIV has been proven to exist.⁸ (They are thus in fundamental conflict with another denialist faction that, following Peter Duesberg, acknowledges the existence of the virus but incorrectly believes that it is harmless.⁹) The Perth Group claims improbably that it was founded in 1981, the year *The Lancet* first reported eight cases of Kaposi's Sarcoma in gay men and long before the virus, the denial of which is the group's mission, was discovered. Not one of the members of the Perth Group over the years is an expert in HIV or AIDS. The group's composition has changed, but two of its three founders and

the past, but has said that she refused to be tested during her pregnancies, declined ARV prophylaxis, refused to allow her at-risk newborns to be tested for HIV antibodies or the virus itself (she sought pediatricians who would not challenge this dangerous, and ultimately deadly, decision), and insisted on breastfeeding, a significant risk for mother-to-child transmission. See “A Mother's Denial, a Daughter's Death,” by Charles Ornstein and Daniel Costello, *Los Angeles Times* September 24, 2005, <http://www.aidstruth.org/LATIMES-article-9-24-2005.php>. See also http://www.mothering.com/articles/new_baby/breastfeeding/hiv-underground.html and http://www.mothering.com/articles/new_baby/breastfeeding/hiv-underground-side2.html, in which HIV+ women are encouraged to conceal their serostatus from doctors and other service providers in order to avoid recommendations of any barriers to viral transmission, such as ARV prophylaxis and avoiding breastfeeding.

⁵ See the critique of Al-Bayati's report by Nick Bennett, M.D., Ph.D., http://catallarchy.net/blog/wp-content/images/A_report_on_Eliza.pdf. For a summary of the denialist spin following Eliza Jane's tragic death, see <http://oracknows.blogspot.com/2005/12/eliza-jane-scovill-case-on-primetime.html>

⁶ For the requirements for certification as a pathologist, see <http://www.abpath.org/ReqForCert.htm>.

⁷ Fees are listed on his website: <http://www.toxi-health.com>.

⁸ For a succinct and devastating summary of what is wrong with the Perth Group, see Michael Coon's critique “HIV, AIDS, and the Distortion of Science.” *Misc Health AIDS*, August, 2000, http://www.aegis.org/topics/hiv_exist.html (accessed 1/15/08).

⁹ In 1996, Duesberg claimed a prize of \$1,000 pounds offered by the Perthian denialist magazine *Continuum* (whose creators have all died from HIV/AIDS) but was denied it: see the exchange between the two factions at <http://www.virusmyth.com/aids/award.htm>.

apparently the only active members at present are Eleni Papadopulos-Eleopoulos, a medical technician, and Dr. Valendar Turner, an emergency room physician.¹⁰ Neither has studied HIV or specialized in HIV/AIDS medicine.

The Perth Group's leader, Eleni Papadopulos-Eleopoulos, misrepresents herself on the denialist website Virusmyth, which hosts the Perth Group's page, as follows: "Eleni Papadopulos-Eleopoulos Ph.D. is a Professor of Medical Physics."¹¹ Other allied sources describe her as a "biophysicist"¹² and a "nuclear physicist."¹³ In fact, Ms. Papadopulos-Eleopoulos does not have a PhD in anything, despite Virusmyth's claims. She has only the equivalent of a Bachelor of Science degree in physics from a university in Romania. She is employed at the Royal Perth Hospital as a medical technician; her duties are "to test people for sensitivity to ultraviolet radiation."¹⁴ Nor is Ms. Papadopulos-Eleopoulos a professor anywhere, of any kind. Indeed, the University of Western Australia, the affiliate institution of the Royal Perth Hospital where she works, has instructed both Papadopulos-Eleopoulos and Turner not to claim publicly that they have any connection with the university.¹⁵

Valendar Turner, Papadopulos-Eleopoulos's Perth Group collaborator, does have a medical degree, but he is an Emergency Room physician with no expertise in HIV whatsoever. In 2007, Papadopulos-Eleopoulos and Turner offered to serve as "expert witnesses" at the trial of an HIV+ man, Andre Parenzee, accused of recklessly endangering the lives of three women by exposing them to the virus through unprotected sex without telling them he was positive (one woman was infected). The presiding judge, Justice John Sulan, concluded that the Perth Group members had no qualifications or practical experience in virology, immunology or epidemiology, and thus were not qualified to express opinions about the existence of HIV, or whether it had been shown to cause AIDS. The judge found that the pair relied entirely on the work of others, which they often took out of context and misrepresented. Their arguments were found to lack plausibility and cogency, and to have "minimal" probative value.¹⁶ In short, they are not the "experts" they pretend to be.

Justice Sulan also identified another troubling way that Papadopulos-Eleopoulos and Turner misrepresent themselves: by falsely claiming to collaborate with respected scientists. They stated, for example, that legitimate HIV researcher Dr. Martyn French had agreed to collaborate on a project analyzing oxidative stress in the blood of patients with HIV. The Perth Group members refer to this as proof of their own involvement in experimental research. However, Dr. French himself sharply repudiates any role in this supposed "collaboration" beyond agreeing to allow them access to biological samples, and indeed he wrote to the CEO of the Royal Perth Hospital expressing concern about

¹⁰ The third founder is John Papadimitriou, a Professor of Pathology at the Royal Perth Hospital. He seems to be less active in HIV denialism in recent years.

¹¹ <http://www.virusmyth.net/aids/index/epapadopoulos.htm> (accessed 1/15/08)

¹² <http://www.theperthgroup.com/aboutpg.html> (accessed 1/15/08).

¹³ <http://zengersmag.blogspot.com/2007/05/robert-gallo-on-witness-stand-hiv aids.html> (accessed 1/15/08).

¹⁴ The characterization is by Justice John Sulan in his dismissal of Papadopulos-Eleopoulos's request to be accepted as an expert witness in an HIV case: <http://www.aidstruth.org/Supreme-Court-of-South-Australia.pdf> (accessed 1/15/08).

¹⁵ "HIV Experts Line Up to Refute Denier." *The Australian*, 2/1/07.

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,20867,21151217-23289,00.html> (accessed 1/16/08).

¹⁶ <http://www.avert.org/evidence.htm>.

public comments that Papadopoulos-Eleopoulos was making.¹⁷ The work was never actually initiated, conducted, brought to conclusion or published. The Perth Group use their false account of this episode as a ploy to claim that they are what they are not: bona-fide HIV/AIDS researchers respected by, and in dialog with, their peers. In the words of Justice Sulan, “*Their evidence demonstrates how they misinterpret their position and promote their opinions by attempting to authenticate their views in a misleading way.*”¹⁸

Roberto Giraldo embellishes his position, and allows his allies to misrepresent it

Denialist Dr. Roberto Giraldo was until mid-2006 a laboratory technician at the New York Presbyterian Hospital in New York City. For many years, including when he interacted with South African politicians in 2000, he let it be thought that he held a faculty or research position at the hospital’s affiliate academic institution, the Weill Medical College of Cornell University. For example, on an undated page on his personal website, Giraldo states, “For the last 6 years I have been working at a laboratory of clinical immunology in one of the most prestigious University Hospitals in the City of New York.”¹⁹ The hospital is indeed prestigious, but Giraldo omits the fact that he was technician working under supervision and not a properly qualified, independent researcher.

Giraldo’s professional position has been misrepresented, presumably with his knowledge and consent, in the introductory remarks to interviews with him. One example is found in *The Townsend Letter for Doctors and Patients*, an alternative medicine publication that frankly acknowledges that it “encourage[s] reports which frequently are *not data-based but are anecdotal. Hence, information presented may not be proven or factually correct*”:²⁰ “Since May, 1993, Dr. Giraldo has been a physician-technologist at a molecular laboratory in a university medical center in New York.”²¹ The statement that he had the role of physician of any kind in any institution in New York is false. Similarly, the introduction to an interview with him on the denialist website “Rethinking AIDS” noted that “soon after he began working at a prestigious New York City university hospital laboratory that runs tests for a variety of microbes”—again eliding his real position there—Giraldo “asked colleagues and lab technicians” about the HIV antibody test procedure. He again falsely inflates his position by distinguishing between “colleagues” and “technicians” and implying that his “colleagues” are the scientists and not the technicians.²²

Giraldo is one of several people who is misrepresented, presumably at his request or with his consent, on the list of members of the “advisory board” of Christine Maggiore’s denialist group, Alive and Well AIDS Alternatives, on the group’s website. He is incorrectly described there as “Dr. Roberto Giraldo, M.D., specialist in infectious and

¹⁷ Prosecution Written Submissions, Filed by Stephen Pallaras, QC:

<http://garlan.org/Cases/Parenzee/ProsecutionSummation.pdf>, page 5, fn 6 (accessed 1/15/08).

¹⁸ “Reasons for Decision of The Honourable Justice Sulan”, R v PARENZEE [2007] SASC 143, Supreme Court of South Australia, 17 April 2007, p, 153. Emphasis ours.

¹⁹ On his website at <http://www.robertogiraldo.com/eng/papers/EveryoneTestsPositive.html> (accessed 1/16/08).

²⁰ <http://www.townsendletter.com/whoarewe.htm> (accessed Feb. 5, 2008, our italics).

²¹ “The emergence of AIDS in the US: interview with Roberto Giraldo, MD,” *Townsend Letter for Doctors and Patients*, Oct, 2005 by Marcus A. Cohen. P. 3.

²² Paul Philpott, “Is everybody positive for HIV?” *Rethinking AIDS*, Vol. 8, No. 5, May 2000. http://political-resources.com/hr/ra/2000-05-1_EverybodyPos.html (accessed 1/16/08).

tropical diseases, Cornell Medical Center, New York, N.Y.”²³ Again, he does not and never has held any such position: he was a research technician carrying out routine lab duties who has never been licensed to practice medicine in the United States. The misrepresentations of his status intended to engender respect and imbue him with medical authority, which his “work”²⁴ did not justify. Giraldo no longer works at the New York Presbyterian Hospital and is now thought to be in Brazil, where he claims an association with “analytic trilogy,” a “human potential” group that posits that the origins of disease lie in envy.²⁵

2. Denialists Pad their Publications

Publications in peer-reviewed journals are one important measure of a scientist’s standing and of the validity and rigor of the research. Denialists, few of whom are academic scientists, often pretend to be HIV/AIDS researchers by padding their lists of publications with letters to the editor and other unreviewed materials.

The Perth Group misrepresents its “publications”

Eleni Papadopulos-Eleopulos and Valendar Turner claim that “The Perth Group has published scientific papers and letters in peer reviewed medical journals as well as in the popular press”²⁶ and that “Over the past decade and more she and her colleagues have published many scientific papers questioning the HIV/AIDS hypothesis.”²⁷ The Perth Group itself lists on its website over 20 articles “published in scientific journals.”²⁸ But *not one* of these publications contains any experimental data derived by the authors themselves. Many are merely “Letters to the Editor.” Such letters are not peer reviewed and may be chosen by journal editors for publication merely because they are provocative.

The remaining Perth Group publications are ill-informed reviews of other people’s work that reveal the authors’ lack of familiarity with scientific facts and methods. They are almost invariably published in obscure, low-ranking journals that are of no interest to HIV/AIDS researchers and clinicians (such as *Emergency Medicine Australia*), are not peer reviewed, and/or are not listed by Medline. Valendar Turner even includes letters to daily newspapers in his list of publications. Rebecca Culshaw, a North American mathematician and, like the Perth Group, a denier that HIV exists, boasts of an article in the *Journal of American Physicians and Surgeons*.²⁹ This journal title might sound important and prestigious, but the publication is neither of these things: it is the “house magazine of a right-wing American fringe group”³⁰ called the Association of American

²³ www.aliveandwell.org (accessed 1/16/08).

²⁴ <http://www.aidstruth.org/howimmunoassayswork.php>.

²⁵ <http://www.analyticaltrilogy.com/intro.html>.

²⁶ groups.msn.com/ThePerthGroup-DiscussionForum

²⁷ “Does HIV Exist?” An interview with Eleni Papadopulos-Eleopulos, by Christine Johnson. <http://www.primitivism.com/hiv-interview.htm> (accessed 1/16/08)

²⁸ www.theperthgroup.com/paperspublished.html (accessed 1/16/08)

²⁹ <http://www.jpands.org/jpands1104.htm> Culshaw’s uninformed musings are annihilated by Ruy Ribiero and Ken Witwer at <http://www.aidstruth.org/JPandS-327.pdf> (accessed 1/16/08).

³⁰ Brian Deer: “MMR: Oh Deer, Oh Dear.” <http://briandeer.com/wakefield/private-eye.htm> (accessed 1/16/08)

Physicians and Surgeons³¹ that is listed as a “questionable organization” on Quackwatch.com.³²

The Perth Group also lists 18 articles and letters that are not publications because they were *rejected* by the editors of scientific journals.³³ A rejected article or letter is not a publication, it is merely material deemed unworthy of publication because of its lack of scientific merit or significance. Professional scientists neither take pride in rejections nor list them on their CVs. Perhaps for the Perth Group, rejection is taken as a badge of honor, another opportunity to pretend that they are persecuted, modern-day Galileos fighting the censorious forces of “Big Science.” But as Bob Park of the University of Maryland said about another group of pseudoscientists who complained that their work was “rejected by journal editors and even subjected to ridicule”: “To wear the mantle of Galileo it is not enough that you be persecuted by an unkind establishment; you must also be right.”³⁴

Other less-than-legitimate denialist publication venues

Dr. Harold Foster is a geography professor with expertise in glaciation who has branched out, improbably, into nutrition research. Foster is driven by his conviction that AIDS is caused by HIV only in conjunction with a nutritional deficit.³⁵ Foster publishes in the *Journal of Orthomolecular Medicine (JOM)*,³⁶ which has also published articles by the notorious vitamin profiteer and HIV denialist Matthias Rath. *JOM* is not recognized by the U.S. National Library of Medicine; its publisher, the International Society for Orthomolecular Medicine, is listed by Quackwatch.com.³⁷

Some denialists are so desperate for “publications” that they have launched their own “scientific journals” to publish their own material. A good example is *Medical Veritas*, “The Journal of Medical Truth,” produced by Medical Veritas International,³⁸ a group dedicated to pseudoscientific positions on the usual range of topics —autism, vaccination, fluoridation, HIV denialism, and the like.³⁹ In a pathetic homage to the real scientific publications listed on PubMed, *Medical Veritas* calls its search function “Pubmednci.com”—“nci” standing for “No Conflicts of Interest” (and not the term that is far more common in scientific circles, National Cancer Institute). Yet Mohammed Al-Bayati—the pathologist-for-hire on Maggiore’s Alive and Well board—is a “featured author” in *Medical Veritas*, which showcases his fee-driven “findings” that various

³¹ The Association of American Physicians and Surgeons claims to be non-partisan and says that its journal is independent. These claims are examined at conwebwatch.tripod.com/stories/2005/medicine.html (Accessed 1/16/08) and found to be wanting in accuracy. In addition to promoting HIV denialism, this rag has published articles falsely claiming that abortion is a cause of breast cancer, that fossil fuels do not cause global warming; it also oppose the theory of evolution, considers the FDA and Medicaid to be unconstitutional, regards immigration to be dangerous to the medical system, and supports “reforming” gay people into heterosexuals.

³² <http://www.quackwatch.org/04ConsumerEducation/nonrecorg.html> (accessed 1/16/08)

³³ www.theperthgroup.com/rejected.html

³⁴ Bob Park of the University of Maryland, on his blog: <http://bobpark.physics.umd.edu/WN99/wn061199.html> (accessed 1/16/08).

³⁵ This does not make him a denialist as such, but rather a proponent of a particularly narrow co-factor theory of HIV disease progression. Complex interactions among multiple cofactors are widely understood to be involved in both vulnerability to infection and disease progression of HIV and almost all other pathogens.

³⁶ www.orthomed.org/jom/jom.html.

³⁷ <http://www.quackwatch.com/04ConsumerEducation/nonrecorg.html> (accessed 1/16/08).

³⁸ www.medicalveritas.com.

³⁹ www.newmediaexplorer.org/sepp/2004/06/28/medical_veritas_tragic_consequences_of_childhood_vaccinations.htm.

deaths attributed to “shaken baby syndrome” or AIDS were the result of vaccination, or acetaminophen, or antibiotics. All of the papers published by *Medical Veritas* are trademarked “Pearblossom Private School, Inc. Publishing Division.” Pearblossom Private School is a company that sells educational programs to the families of home-schooled children, featuring “same day email grading,” and promising a generous approach to testing: “students may improve their test scores by correcting any missed questions.”⁴⁰ The correspondence school is associated with the Jehovah’s Witnesses; its director, Gary Goldman, is “editor in chief” of *Medical Veritas*.

3. The Denial-List: Denialists fraudulently claim support from those who reject denialism and despise denialists

Very few active doctors and scientists subscribe to the lies and contradictions of HIV/AIDS denial, and almost no one who has actually worked with the virus or clinically treated people with HIV and AIDS supports denialism. Yet HIV denialists regularly claim that “thousands of doctors and scientists” are “rethinkers” who believe that HIV does not exist, or that it does not cause AIDS, or that AIDS does not exist. They claim that these names can be found on lists posted on various sites on the Internet. But a closer look reveals these lists to be flimsy tissues woven of deceptions and dilettantes.

The headline to the list currently on the *rethinkingAIDS.com* website reads: “The AIDS industry and media want you to think that there are only a handful of scientists who doubt the HIV-AIDS theory. Here’s the reality.” It then adds the gigantic caveat that “Some of the people below question only key parts of the Hiv (*sic*) theory, not all of it. Limitations on their beliefs are shown in brackets.” Readers are invited to email “If you think you belong on this web page (or wish to be removed).”⁴¹ But there is no need to do so: your name may be added without your request or consent, and asking to be removed is usually futile, because *RethinkingAIDS* is likely to leave your name on despite your objections, or to black it out to imply that you were “pressured” to remove it.

The lists of names are not dated, nor attached to clear or consistent positions

There is no consistent statement with which the people whose names are listed are supposed to be in agreement: there is the reference to “scientists who doubt the HIV/AIDS theory” in one headline, but few of the signers are scientists. Denialists use the list to claim support for any and all of their contradictory positions, and have attached the same names, undated, to a variety of petitions and statements since a first sign-on letter calling for a review of the evidence, for and against, the viral hypothesis was first circulated in 1991.⁴² Of those who actually ever signed a petition or willingly added their names to the list, many supported only the principle of open scientific debate, which denialists falsely represented as being threatened. Others even more narrowly supported Peter Duesberg’s right to freedom of speech and *not* his claims about HIV/AIDS.

⁴⁰ <http://www.pearblossomschool.com/description.html> (accessed 1/17/08). Pearblossom seems to be connected with the Jehovah’s Witnesses In the past

⁴¹ www.rethinkingaids.com/quotes/rethinkers.htm. Several similar versions of this “denial-list” exist. AIDS Truth examined versions of the list from November 2, 2007, and February 4, 2008.

⁴² <http://www.virusmyth.com/aids/group.htm>

Those on the lists therefore cannot be said to share consistently any position on anything related to HIV, AIDS, or anything else. But ambiguity about just what it is that the people listed agree with is crucial if the denialists are to sustain the impression that many people share a “dissident” position. The vagueness also avoids exposing the deep, irreconcilable schisms between different strains of denialism—for example, that which separates those who know that HIV exists but believe that it is harmless, those who believe HIV doesn’t exist at all, and those who know HIV exists and is deadly but believe that it can be cured by untested alternative treatments. These positions are very different from one another, but RethinkingAIDS lumps into a single pseudo-intellectual agglomerate, concealing the contradictions.

Over 2,500 names—maybe, but *not* of scientists and doctors

Contrary to denialist claims, the Denial Lists are not a record of “thousands of doctors and scientists” who question if HIV is the primary cause of AIDS. Very few, if any, of the people whose names are listed are qualified experts on the science of HIV and AIDS, and there is no evidence that any attempt was made to verify the professional degrees attributed to the signers whose names are followed by initials. Indeed, many of the names are untraceable and may not be associated with actual persons.

AIDSTruth examined a version of the Denial List available in early November, 2007. Of the 2,491 names then on the list, only about 330 (about 13%) were said to be Medical Doctors. Of the non-MDs, only around 150 (about 6%) are listed as having earned a doctorate in the biological sciences. *Four fifths of the signers are not MDs or scientists. In other words, over 80% of the presumed signers were professionally unqualified to judge the science and medicine of HIV and AIDS.* Instead, they are predominantly students, writers, “alternative health” proponents, non-scientist academics, and random people with neither qualifications nor relevant affiliations.

Furthermore, although nearly 500 of the names (as of November 2007) belonged to MDs, biology PhDs, or both, any impact of this figure is tempered by several factors. Many of the most-qualified signatories *did not sign* the list: someone else added their names without their knowledge or consent. Others were added from previous lists that had little or nothing to do with the validity of HIV/AIDS science (as detailed already). Some are dead (including the overtly denialist Casper Schmidt and the decidedly non-denialist Linus Pauling⁴³). The remaining professional signers include a disproportionate number of “naturopaths,” “homeopaths,” and other “alternative medicine” doctors. Very, very few of the legitimate doctors and scientists who have actually signed this list (as opposed to be signed to it) have ever worked with HIV+ patients or researched HIV.

Names are added without consent

Many names, especially those of scientists and doctors, were placed on these lists without the individuals’ permission, consent or knowledge, simply because denialists interpreted something they had written or said as somehow being supportive of HIV denialism. This underlying motive for this deceptive tactic is to maintain a high number of scientifically qualified signatories, for the typical qualifications of those on the list have declined considerably since the first ones were assembled in the early 1990s, when most of the signatories actually were scientists and doctors.

⁴³ See <http://www.aidstruth.org/Nobel-Denial.pdf>

In a few cases, “limitations on their beliefs are shown in brackets,” which implies that the other purported signers fully agree with any and all denialist claims. Moreover, the “limitations” given may be simply wrong. See, for example, the “limitations” given for Dr. Shyh-Ching Lo, MD, PhD are: “[Says AIDS is much more complicated than just Hiv and Hiv’s causative role is only “possible,” i.e., not proven].” This is flatly wrong: Dr. Lo found a strain of Mycoplasma in some AIDS patients, and he once suggested that this organism could be a co-factor with HIV in the development of AIDS. *Dr. Lo does not question the existence of HIV or its role in AIDS.*⁴⁴ His position is completely misrepresented.

Names are not removed despite requests

David Crowe and others who manage the lists don’t just decide which names to post without the will or consent of the individuals concerned; they also insist on keeping names on the list even when people ask to be removed.⁴⁵

Many who have learned that their names were added without their knowledge or consent have asked to be removed from the list and have stated clearly that they reject HIV denialism. Similarly, many people who voluntarily added their names in the early days of the epidemic when it was still reasonable to ask for more evidence for a viral cause have long since been persuaded by the evidence that HIV exists and is the cause of AIDS. When these individuals learn that the list is still circulating and that their names are on it, they often ask to be removed.

When people request that their names be removed from the list, they have been met with scorn, their identities have been questioned, and their positions have been challenged. For example, Toussaint Severin Sibailly, MD, an African AIDS doctor, learned that his name had been added because of a statement he had reportedly once made about women’s AIDS symptoms, which David Crowe wrongly interpreted to be a “rethinker” position. Dr. Sibailly emailed Crowe and asked that his name be removed from the list. Crowe did not respond. The doctor wrote again. This time, Crowe claimed he had not received the first email, and then wrote that he would need numerous clarifications before he removed the doctor's name. The doctor responded that he didn't have time to get into a discussion with Crowe, and that he wanted his name removed. Here is Crowe’s haughty reply:

First of all, a list does not require permission. There is a list of HIV-positive people on Wikipedia, for example, based on public information, just as your inclusion was based on public information. We really have no moral obligation to remove your name unless we somehow misquoted you. As a matter of principle, we always respect requests by someone to remove their name, but obviously we first have to perform due diligence on the request... I am happy to remove your name, but first I need you to answer some questions that I have:

- Our listing is for a Severin Sibailly yet you are emailing me as Toussaint Sibailly. How do we know that you are Severin Sibailly?
- Do you deny ever saying, as recorded in a 1993 Meditel documentary, "Generally speaking the two women we have just seen this morning are asymptomatic. They have no signs of AIDS, but the problem is, we don't know when they were infected. But what puzzles us is the fact that many of the women who are classed as [HIV]

⁴⁴ SC Lo, S Tsai, Benish JR, JW Shih, DJ Wear, and DM Wong. “Enhancement of HIV-1 cytotoxic effects in CD4+ lymphocytes by the AIDS-associated mycoplasma.” *Science*, March 1991, Vol 251, Issue 4997, 1074-1076

negative fulfill the definitions for AIDS."? If you did not say this, then who is on tape making this statement? If you did say this, can you explain how this can be interpreted as support for the HIV=AIDS=Death dogma?

- Regarding 1993, are you referring to the Bangui definition of AIDS which was developed in 1986, which does not require an HIV test, but only common symptoms like fever, cough, diarrhea and weight loss for an AIDS diagnosis? Or the US definition which, in 1993, was modified to allow people with a positive HIV test and low CD4 cell counts?

While you're at it, perhaps you could reveal what peer reviewed literature you think contains the proof that HIV is the cause of AIDS. I ask you this as a public service, since we have been unable to find this. I'm hoping that your firmly held views are not just based on your faith in higher status scientists, but based on actual science. If you cannot provide a list of references, I will sadly just have to assume that you are yet another faith-based doctor.

Regards,

David Crowe⁴⁶

⁴⁶ The text of part of this exchange was posted on the Aetiology blog by "Brad" on October 29, 2007 (http://scienceblogs.com/aetiology/2007/10/denialism_they_dont_remember.php#comment-619053). The exchange continued:

> -----Original Message-----

>

> From: tsibailly2000@

> Sent: Tue, 18 Sep 2007 16:49:13 +0000 (GMT)

> To: david.crowe@

> Subject: Re : Re : Inclusion on "AIDS rethinkers" listing

>

> Dear David,

>

> I don't want to spend my time on this.

>

> I am sure you did not understand understand what you have heard or seen. If you are talking to 1993, please refer to the Bagui's criteria for AIDS case definition.

>

> Just for intellectual honesty purpose, you should have asked for my permission before having my name on your list.

>

> I hope this is the last message I am sending to you and again I will appreciate it if you could remove my name on your list and forget me.

>

> Regards,

>

> Dr Sibailly

>

> -----Original Message-----

> From: david.crowe@

> Sent: Fri, 7 Sep 2007 18:00:00 -0600

> To: tsibailly2000@

> Subject: Re : Inclusion on "AIDS rethinkers" listing

>

> Toussaint;

>

> We added people to this list based on their published statements.

>

> Are you saying that you never said publicly that many HIV-negative women in Africa have Aids?

>

> If that statement is true, why would you want to be removed from a list that merely states the truth about your approach to AIDS?

>

Today, the doctor's good name remains on the Denial List. Crowe's padding of the list with unwilling MDs is the only reason many names are on the list, and no amount of refutation by a listed individual may be sufficient to persuade Crowe to remove a name once he's added it.

As we have noted, in the past, names remained on the list despite requests for removal. More recently, a number of names that had been removed were added back, but were blacked out to convey the false impression that people asking to be removed are really "dissidents," pressured by the imaginary "AIDS Orthodoxy" to publicly renounce their positions. Crowe insults the integrity and courage of these people by stating that: "Some names on this webpage have been removed because AIDS Inc. apparently feels very threatened by public exposure of the tremendous dissent to their very profitable HIV theory, so they are contacting people and pressuring them to remove their names from this page. These names are blacked out."⁴⁷ This is characteristic of conspiratorial, paranoid thinking: when statements that denialists have taken out of context and misrepresented are clarified or corrected, the denialists take the correction itself as proof of a conspiracy by the "AIDS Mafia" to silence them.⁴⁸

The Denial List, in short, is a compilation of the names of people who never signed on the list; people whose views have changed since they signed; people who thought they were signaling their support to something other than a denial of the existence of HIV exists and its causative role in AIDS; people listed without any identifying affiliation or address, who may not even exist; dead people; people who don't doubt that HIV causes AIDS and want their names removed but can't get Crowe to respond appropriately; and, finally, some misguided people who do actually want their names listed, the overwhelming majority of whom are not qualified doctors or scientists. The Denial List as it currently exists is therefore a deception intended to mislead people into believing that there are good reasons, supported by legitimate experts, for questioning the fact that HIV causes AIDS. That deception is deadly: by falsely asserting that many "doctors and scientists" question HIV and AIDS, and by fraudulently listing names, they may persuade some people that practicing safer sex, getting tested for HIV, and, if positive, taking effective medications at the appropriate time, are all unnecessary actions.

> According to our information, you made the following statement on a Meditel video "AIDS and Africa" that first aired in 1993: "Generally speaking the two women we have just seen this morning are asymptomatic. They have no signs of AIDS, but the problem is, we don't know when they were infected. But what puzzles us is the fact that many of the women who are classed as [HIV] negative fulfill the definitions for AIDS."

>

> Do you deny that? Or can you explain how it doesn't mean what a straightforward interpretation of the words seems to say?

>

> And can you confirm that you go by the name Severin as well as Toussaint?

>

> Regards,

>

> David Crowe

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ David Dunbar and Brad Reagan have noted a similar process among 9/11 conspiracy theorists. For example, when an explosives expert, Van Romero, stated that "fire is what caused the buildings to fail... conspiracists view that clarification as proof that somebody 'got to' Romero." (Dunbar, David, and Brad Reagan. Debunking 9/11 Myths: Why Conspiracy Theories Can't Stand Up to the Facts. New York: Hearst Books. 2006. P. 101.) Many HIV denialists are also 9/11 conspiracy theorists.

In marked contrast, the “Durban Declaration” that affirms that HIV is the cause of AIDS was assembled in 2000, over a period of a few months.⁴⁹ Its content is clear. It lists the names of over 5,000 medical professionals or AIDS scientists who all have active experience of working with HIV/AIDS or HIV-infected people. All of the signatories have higher degrees (as requested by the organizers), and every signatory had to actively request to be listed by personally writing to the organizers. That is the ethical approach to the assembly of a listing of supporters of a defined position. The Rethinkers list operates very differently, with the goal of deception rather than openness.

4. Impersonation

Several of the more active denialists impersonate other people on the Internet. We distinguish impersonation from the use of normal “screen names”: the intent in the instances we describe is to deceive others to believe a real, often well known, person holds views when in fact they do not.

Pretending to be Robert Gallo

“Robert Gallo” is the name most often fraudulently used by denialists, most commonly when they are posting on blogs about HIV and AIDS. On December 26, 2004, on the “Chicago Indymedia” website, a denialist, almost certainly Andrew Maniotis, posted a comment under the pseudonym “Robert Gallo.”⁵⁰ Maniotis’s identity is evident because the piece is characteristically long and incoherent, and it includes an early version of remarks defaming Gallo that Maniotis reiterated in 2006 on Harvey Bialy’s “BarnesWorld” blog. It is filled with lies and inaccuracies:

This year, in 2004, it has been 20 years since "HIV" was announced by media press release (sic—it was a press conference) as being the probable cause of AIDS by Robert Gallo and Margaret Heckler. It has been about 20 years since Gallo rushed to patent the first "HIV" test kit before any of his 4 papers were peer reviewed (sic—all had been peer reviewed and accepted) and published in Science, and about 18 years since he and his colleagues were subsequently tried and convicted (sic—there was no criminal trial or conviction) of scientific misconduct by the Dingell Commission and the Office of Scientific Integrity of the NIH for fudging data (sic—fudging data was not the issue in these investigations), and for attempting to steal (sic—Gallo was not accused of attempted theft or theft) Montagnier's "virus isolate" (sic—double commas are misleading: it was indeed a virus isolate) and claiming it as their discovery.⁵¹

In 2007, a prolific poster on Tara Smith’s science blog *Aetiology* pretended to be Dr. Gallo, chastising an “orthodox” thinker for failing to toe the party line and claiming (falsely) that the only controlled studies of AZT lasted for just a “couple” of days.⁵² The only people who were fooled were other denialists. But beginning in September, 2007, denialist impersonations of Robert Gallo took on a more serious form. A cyber-criminal sent email messages to addresses around the world, altering the address headings to make it appear as if Robert Gallo had sent it himself from his institutional email account or from the account of an associate. The message states that the writer, “Gallo,” knows now that HIV does not cause AIDS and he regrets the needless suffering he has caused.

⁴⁹ <http://www.aidstruth.org/the-durban-declaration.php>

⁵⁰ <http://chicago.indymedia.org/mod/comments/display/50414/index.php>

⁵¹ *ibid*

⁵² http://scienceblogs.com/aetiology/2007/08/post_44.php#comment-541828

Strangely, posters to several denialist internet forums, including the “aidsmythexposed” discussion group on msn.com, acknowledged that the email is a fraud but celebrated it as a triumph of clever deception that is helpful to their cause.

This denialist internet forgery did not end with the “Gallo” message. It was followed by a fake “reply” to Gallo purporting to be from “Luc Montagnier,” also from a seemingly legitimate address, stating that he is “so glad that you finally realise your mistake. Right from the beginning I maintained that HIV cannot be the cause for AIDS. But you Americans are sometimes so pushy, it is really difficult to get alternative viewpoints across.”⁵³ It was, of course, not from Montagnier at all.

“Casey Cohen” Sends Emails from Christine Maggiore’s Address

Another form of Internet-enabled impersonation involves requests sent to legitimate HIV/AIDS scientists or clinicians to engage in a public debate with one or more AIDS denialists. The language of these requests is often the first clue that they may not be legitimate—they tend to be sycophantic and to use phrases that are attributed to the “orthodoxy” by denialists but are never actually articulated by real HIV/AIDS physicians or researchers. One series of emails was between someone calling herself “Casey Cohen” and Dr. Nick Bennett, a pediatrician and member of AIDStruth.org. “Casey Cohen” invited Bennett to debate denialists Christine Maggiore and Charles Gesheker in New York, and, when Dr. Bennett declined, urged him histrionically to “Please help us end what you so rightly call ‘a real danger to public health and to the lives of specific individuals.’ How could your participation possibly ‘validate’ the dissident points?! It will annihilate them!! The odds are stacked in your favor! And you have the truth on your side!” “Cohen” sent the first message from an email address known to be Christine Maggiore’s (mexicanwetsuit@hotmail.com); although she used an alternative address for later emails, the headers showed that she was using the same IP address as with the first email.⁵⁴ But over time, “Casey’s” messages show frustration and eventually she becomes completely unhinged.⁵⁵

Amazingly, this dishonesty is celebrated by the denialists online. The Rethinking AIDS website posted the email exchanges⁵⁶ (most of which were considered private) and again boasted about the tactics of deception used by AIDS denialists in their attempts to garner quotes from well-known anti-denialists under conditions which the denialists would control. An alternative explanation for the requests for debate (which were sent out to several AIDS experts around the same time) is that the denialists, or perhaps Christine Maggiore specifically, were looking for clues as to how to structure various legal arguments in relation the tragic death of Ms Maggiore’s daughter. Whether or not “Casey” is a real person, the intentions of the requests were clearly misrepresented – and there must have been a reason for doing so. As one respondent says, “You approached me under false pretenses to try to get me to participate in a debate at WBAI that, as far as I can tell, is nonexistent, while pretending to be enthusiastically on the side of the conventional scientific view that HIV causes

⁵³ <http://keelynet.wordpress.com/2007/10/24/hiv-not-the-cause-of-aids-2nd-email/> This blog also posted the original internet forgery purporting to be from Robert Gallo. (Accessed 2/14/08).

⁵⁴ <http://aidsmyth.blogspot.com/2006/11/dissidents-stoop-to-new-lows.html>.

⁵⁵ <http://www.rethinkingaids.com/Challenges/index.html>.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

AIDS. You approached me as a second thought, only after having failed to trick Nick Bennett using similar tactics.”

The dishonest nature of these requests has strengthened the general consensus among anti-denialists that requests to debate with AIDS denialists will be refused on principle. There are other arguments against such debates, such as allowing the denialists a soapbox and giving their pseudoscience undue credence. But anyone would agree that walking into a set-up created by lies is hardly the most sensible thing to do. The denialists actually broadcast these refusals as evidence that the orthodoxy is unable to debate, but in fact they are in part a response to the untrustworthy nature of the AIDS denialist movement in general, and those persons making the requests in particular.

Denialists pretend to be AIDStruth.org

Several weeks after the “Casey Cohen” hoax emails, an email message purporting to be from “info@aidstruth.org” stating that HIV is not the cause of AIDS and listing side effects of ARVs was widely disseminated online.⁵⁷ AIDS Truth does not have an email address, never sends out mass messages, and of course takes an evidence-based approach that affirms that HIV is the cause of AIDS and that antiretroviral treatment, while not a cure, is lifesaving. In a comment to a blog, a denialist using the name David Crowe asked, in reference to this email and the Gallo and Montaigner frauds, asked, “is it only the 'denialists' who have a sense of humor? Clearly those letters supposedly from Gallo etc. were hoaxes, There were enough clues in the letter for anyone to figure this out. They were "jokes" (if you don't know the word, look it up in the dictionary) intended to indicate the absurdity of the mainstream HIV=AIDS=Death dogma.”⁵⁸

Steven Davis misrepresents himself as a former “Senator”

HIV denialist Steven Davis likes to casually drop the line, “When I was in the Senate...”⁵⁹ This is intentionally misleading: Davis was never in the United States Senate, which is what is implied by the word when used without a modifying state name preceding it. Rather, he was elected over thirty years ago to the Arizona state legislature as a Republican. His constituents saw fit to send him packing after just one term. Was he in a state senate? Yes. Was he in “THE” Senate? No. He just likes to give the impression he was. Nowadays, Davis spends his time writing and promoting a novel, a work of pure fiction, about HIV/AIDS.⁶⁰

David Rasnick claims all the credit for inventing protease inhibitors

Dr. David Rasnick is identified on the denialist Alive and Well website’s advisory board list to be the “Creator of Protease Inhibitors.”⁶¹ Similar claims are repeated on other denialist websites and in denialist literature. To have created protease inhibitors would be something to boast about: they have saved the lives of millions of people with HIV, and their invention was a breakthrough in HIV treatment. But Rasnick shouldn’t get the credit. It is true that Rasnick worked in a laboratory where some protease

⁵⁷ <http://ronhudson.blogspot.com/2007/10/aids-denialists-show-their-stripes-with.html> (Accessed 2/14/08)

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁹ http://barnesworld.blogs.com/barnes_world/2006/07/curtain_call_fo.html

⁶⁰ Davis’s biography on his website recounts a hilarious string of personal failures: <http://theaidstrial.com/bio.htm>

⁶¹ www.aliveandwell.org, list of board members (accessed 1/16/08)

inhibitors were developed; it is *not* true that Rasnick himself invented that class of drugs. He is not listed on any patents that have been granted in respect of the use of these drugs, something that would be true of an “inventor.” Furthermore, the chemicals Rasnick helped to develop are not used for the treatment of HIV infection—though it would be ironic if they were.

Rasnick has also misrepresented his affiliation, calling himself a visiting professor at the University of California, Berkeley. Rasnick is and was no such thing. Dr. Peter Duesberg, who is a faculty member at Berkeley and a close friend of Rasnick, allowed Rasnick to use his laboratory. The University has debunked this false claim:

I understand David Rasnick claimed an affiliation with our department in an article (The Citizen, April 7). David Rasnick has no affiliation with the University of California, Department of Molecular and Cell Biology. One should obviously be concerned that someone who misrepresents his own affiliation might also misrepresent data and arguments in other areas.
Richard Harland, Ph.D.
University of California, Berkeley
Dept of Molecular and Cell Biology⁶²

Professor Harland has is exactly right. Denialists lie about who they are and who supports them: they cannot be trusted with the truth about HIV and AIDS.

⁶² Letter to The Citizen, South Africa, April 18, 2006:
<http://www.citizen.co.za/index/article.aspx?pDesc=15928,1,22>