

Everything is Fake and Nobody Cares

Episode 5 – Doctor's Orders

TOM POOLEY: Um, how are you?

JAMIE BARTLETT: Yeah, I'm alright.

TOM POOLEY: Aseem just called me. He's quite nervous, I think.

JAMIE BARTLETT: Is he?

TOM POOLEY: About . . . um . . .

JAMIE BARTLETT: He does everything. He's always on . . . He's been on Tucker Carlson and Joe Rogan.

TOM POOLEY: Jamie Bartlett. You're Jamie Bartlett, sorry.

JAMIE BARTLETT: (*laughs*) Stephen Bartlett.

TOM POOLEY: Stephen Bartlett. Now Jamie Bartlett.

JAMIE BARTLETT: Yeah, right, yeah, yeah. (*pause*) I'm back where we started this whole series, at the café in North London where my own producer, Tom, confused me, Jamie Bartlett with rockstar podcaster Stephen Bartlett. Let's carry on where we left off. We've come to meet a British cardiologist and public health activist called Dr Aseem Malhotra. I'm pretty nervous about meeting him. Apparently, he's feeling the same.

TOM POOLEY: But he's nervous about the BBC.

JAMIE BARTLETT: He is, is he? Right.

TOM POOLEY: And he's said to me that he's worried it's going to be a hatchet job.
Um . . . he . . .

JAMIE BARTLETT: Over the past four episodes, I've been trying to understand how and why fakery has become so prevalent in modern life. And this is my chance to finally talk face to face with someone that the vast majority of the medical profession say is pushing fake information to millions of people – that the COVID vaccines are deadly.

ANNOUNCER: Please welcome Dr Aseem Malhotra.

JAMIE BARTLETT: Ten years ago, I reckon someone with Dr Malhotra's message would have been a fringe voice with no platform that few in power would have taken seriously.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: Then it means the COVID mRNA jabs have likely killed or seriously harmed millions of people across the world. So . . .

JAMIE BARTLETT: Not anymore. He reaches millions of people through alternative media, including on Stephen Bartlett's podcast. And many people seem to trust him much more than someone like me, a journalist working for the BBC. Just a few weeks before we meet, he was on stage at the Reform Party conference. According to polls, as we record, they are the party most likely to win the next general election.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: A mistake is one thing, but the cover-up and suppression of this information is criminal, and people need to understand and treat it that way.

JAMIE BARTLETT: And although Reform later distanced themselves from Dr Malhotra's speech, he might still be one of the most influential health thinkers in the world.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: So I went on Dan Wootton's show.

JAMIE BARTLETT: Yeah.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: Come out of Dan Wootton's show and get a missed call. Call it back. It was an American number. 'Hello Dr Malhotra, it's Robert Kennedy Jr. Here.'

JAMIE BARTLETT: Are you serious?

ASEEM MALHOTRA: 'Thank you for your courage.' But he wrote something really beautiful when I met him in Malibu and he basically said, 'Dear Aseem, thank you for you integrity and courage and leadership in this fistfight to save humanity. Your friend and admirer, Robert Kennedy Jr.' And I was really moved. I was like, 'Bloody hell.' So that's . . . that's how we connected.

JAMIE BARTLETT: I'm hoping that speaking to Dr Malhotra in person will give me a new perspective on why this has happened. This is *Everything's Fake and Nobody Cares* with me Jamie Bartlett and my ChatGPT-generated AI assistant, Botlet.

JIMMY BOTLET: Sorry, Jamie, I'm sitting this one out. If the episode is about trust, I probably shouldn't be the voice telling people what to think.

JAMIE BARTLETT: Okay, so just me then. Episode 5 – *Doctor's Orders*.

TOM POOLEY: I'm Tom.

JAMIE BARTLETT: Aseem, lovely to meet you. I'm Jamie.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: Hiya. Nice to meet you, Jamie.

TOM POOLEY: Come through. Have you been, like, running?

ASEEM MALHOTRA: No, I just went for a quick stroll, because . . .

TOM POOLEY: Oh, okay.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: . . . I've just been in the house this morning.

JAMIE BARTLETT: Aseem invites both of us into the front room of his flat, which is completely covered with papers, journals, books, and a 'Make America Healthy Again' cap sits on the shelf right behind me.

TOM POOLEY: This looks good to me. Yeah. If you want to sit, I can set up some lights here.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: Yeah? Awesome.

JAMIE BARTLETT: Just as we're setting up the mics, Aseem gets out his phone. This happens a lot to me these days. It's a sign of the times. He's worried that I'll edit him unfairly.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: You know, I'm going to record it as well. It's only after it comes out, if I feel when I've heard it, this was . . . 'Bloody hell, this was really not balanced,' you know? I get you're getting other perspectives, I get all that. But if it looked like it was just . . . then I'd . . .

JAMIE BARTLETT: That I'd totally taken you out of context, haven't . . .

ASEEM MALHOTRA: Yeah.

JAMIE BARTLETT: . . . fairly given you the chance . . .

ASEEM MALHOTRA: Yeah.

JAMIE BARTLETT: . . . to speak.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: Yeah, yeah. Only then, I'm not . . .

JAMIE BARTLETT: And so we both separately record the interview, sitting at a large table in his front room. I wasn't sure what to expect. I never thought he'd agree to speak to me at all. As we speak, his phone occasionally beeps. He's the man of the moment – and not in a good way. The Health Secretary, Wes Streeting, recently accused him of spreading poisonous lies. Aseem threatened to sue him for defamation.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: The amount of shit that I had to put up with, the abuse, you know, friends who became a bit estranged because of my COVID vaccine stuff, . . .

JAMIE BARTLETT: Yeah.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: . . . I've . . . all my family are dead. I've got no immediate . . . I'm divorced . . .

JAMIE BARTLETT: I'll be open with you. Aseem is sharp, he's eloquent, he is friendly and polite. He answers every single question I ask and is willing to talk for as long as we want. Our interview was scheduled to last an hour. It ended up being closer to two. Dr Aseem's journey into COVID vaccine scepticism wasn't straightforward. He was a consultant cardiologist with the NHS. And though he'd been criticised in the past for his views on statins, in some ways Aseem was ahead of his time. A frequent media commentator about the dangers of sugar and ultra-processed foods years before it became a mainstream worry.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: And actually, to be perfectly honest, you know, I'm someone that has done a lot of work with the BBC over the years, a lot my advocacy has come through the BBC, I've done major stories with them that I . . .

JAMIE BARTLETT: Yeah.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: . . . helped create. I've written 19 op-eds for the Guardian Observer Group, . . .

JAMIE BARTLETT: Yeah, yeah.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: . . . you know, over many years, on the very topics I'm still discussing. What are the credentials of this guy?

JAMIE BARTLETT: You've got a lot of credentials.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: What is his CV.

JAMIE BARTLETT: There's no doubt about that.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: You know, an ambassador for medical colleges for seven years. Trustee of the King's Fund for six years. Named in the Debrett's list in 2016, The Sunday Times, of the, you know, most influential people in science and medicine.

JAMIE BARTLETT: Like nearly all doctors, Aseem was supportive of efforts to develop and make available COVID vaccines. He rolls up his sleeve while we're talking to show me his vaccination scars. He says he's not an anti-vaxxer. But a tragic family event changed the course of his life.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: My father suffered a sudden cardiac arrest about six months after having two doses of Pfizer vaccine. At the time it was inexplicable to me. It was a big story. My dad was a very famous well-known doctor who was a Vice . . . Honorary Vice President of the BMA.

JAMIE BARTLETT: Yeah, I saw.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: And someone tweeted, 'It's the vax.' And I got so angry. I thought – you know, I'm not going to swear, but that was what I was thinking in my head. And I blocked that person instantly. I was like, 'What? How crazy? What are they . . . what are they thinking, like, that's just mad.'

JAMIE BARTLETT: But Aseem started digging and what he says he found made him start to doubt the information coming from the government on this vaccine in particular.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: There's very few things I regret in life, but if there was one thing in my whole life, in my whole life that I've regretted having, is having two doses of that Pfizer vaccine.

JAMIE BARTLETT: He now believes the COVID vaccines are dangerous. More dangerous than COVID itself. How dangerous do you think they are? Like, have they been a net positive or net negative for the world.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: I think it's very, very clear – and I can break that down for you on the best available evidence – so there's been a net harm, overall net harm.

JAMIE BARTLETT: And now there is hard evidence to prove it, he says.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: The evidence is so . . . of the harms is so substantial in so many different ways, in so many different studies . . .

JAMIE BARTLETT: Studies that he says the medical profession and traditional media – places like the BBC – ignore.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: Instead of saying, 'We think Aseem Malhotra is wrong, we disagree, but we should keep an open mind,' they're saying, 'He's dangerous, he's wrong, he's an anti-vaxxer.'

JAMIE BARTLETT: Right.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: You've got to do a deeper dive into this.

JAMIE BARTLETT: After the interview, producer Tom and I go back through what we've heard. I have to admit his story did feel quite compelling. He was bombarding me with numbers, data, reports, quotes. The problem is, I'm not a doctor. What's fake? What's real? I'm not an expert. So to understand why Aseem is popular, I think I need to find someone who can tell me the other story. You know of Dr Aseem Malhotra.

VIKI MAIL: I do.

JAMIE BARTLETT: This is Dr Viki Mail, an Associate Professor of Reproductive Immunology at Imperial College London. She was involved in official efforts to collate data on the effects of the Covid vaccination on fertility, pregnancy and breastfeeding.

VIKI MALE: And that kind of- brought me into talking to a lot of people, really about the facts and the evidence around vaccines, their safety, and how effective they are.

JAMIE BARTLETT: Tom and I decide to take some of Aseem's main claims and his evidence to Viki and talk to her with an open mind, like he suggests. So Aseem says a huge new study shows the Covid vaccine is more dangerous than the virus itself.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: The studies that were led to approval of say, Pfizer and Moderna's mRNA vaccines by the regulators around the world, they actually were independently evaluated. And there was a publication in the journal Vaccine, peer reviewed. They were able to reanalyse Pfizer and Moderna's original trial data. And

what did they find? You were two to four times more likely to suffer serious harm, *serious harm* from the COVID vaccine than you were to be hospitalised with COVID.

JAMIE BARTLETT: I hear those numbers and think, 'Oh, that sounds pretty bad. I don't remember reading about this. What's going on?'

VIKI MALE: Well, there's a reason that you didn't read about it, which is that it doesn't really represent what happened in the trials. Now, the paper that Malhotra cites is a re-analysis of those trials. It was done a couple of years after the fact. And the people who did the reanalysis, they don't have access to all of the data, which turns out to be quite a bad problem. So in the initial trials, they made a list of all the things that they thought might be side effects of these vaccines, and they (*fades out*)

JAMIE BARTLETT: Oh man, this is complicated, isn't it? And in a world of competing stories, I think that's part of the problem. I had to listen a couple of times to figure this out. Basically, what Viki is that in the initial vaccine trials, the researchers – and this is normal – listed all and any bad stuff that happened to participants regardless of whether or not it had anything to do with the vaccine. In this reanalysis she says the researchers used a very wide definition of side effects, including things that might not have been caused by the vaccine. And they counted each individual symptom separately.

VIKI MALE: So, for example, if you had diarrhoea and vomiting, that would be counted twice, even though you, as an individual, might say, 'Okay, well, I had diarrhoea and I had vomiting, but really it was part of the same stomach upset.'

JAMIE BARTLETT: All of these so-called harms were counted up and then compared against the benefits of people not catching COVID, which by definition can only happen to someone once during the trial period.

VIKI MALE: It's even worse than that because side effects happen, by definition, in the first, usually days, but sometimes weeks after vaccination, whereas protection against COVID lasts for months. So again, they're underestimating the benefits even more.

JAMIE BARTLETT: As Dr Malhotra says, the paper he cites was peer-reviewed, but the authors were specifically told to make it clear this paper should not be used to make the kinds of claims Dr Malhotra is making.

VIKI MALE: They actually say, 'Our study is not designed to evaluate the overall harm/benefit of the vaccine programme so far.'

JAMIE BARTLETT: So, the sentence, 'You were two to four times more likely to suffer serious harm from the COVID vaccine than you were to be hospitalised with COVID . . .

ASEEM MALHOTRA: You were two to four times more likely to suffer serious harm from taking the COVID vaccine than you were to be hospitalised with COVID. Think about that for a second.

JAMIE BARTLETT: That sentence is not actually correct?

VIKI MALE: The paper doesn't show that that's true.

JAMIE BARTLETT: Aseem also made a surprising claim that a study had been replicated in Norway that showed the vaccine resulted in one in a thousand people being hospitalised, having a life-changing disability, or even dying.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: Very clear, independently analysed and replicated in Norway as well, about one in a thousand, of serious harm.

JAMIE BARTLETT: He sent us a link to a paper from the Norwegian Medicines Agency from early 2022. And it does say that 5,883 people – a bit more than one in a thousand who'd had the vaccine – had something serious happened to them after their jabs, but crucially . . .

VIKI MALE: You can't use this data to make that statement because the reports aren't all of things that happened *because* of vaccination, only things that happened *after* vaccination. Many of them are likely to be unconnected. And actually, the front page of the document, they actually say that multiple times because they don't want people to make the mistake that Malhotra has made here.

JAMIE BARTLETT: But Aseem says there's more. That the UK government's own health data shows that COVID vaccines are pretty ineffective.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: Their latest data in 2024 actually breaks down, by age group, what is your benefit from the COVID vaccine in preventing hospitalisation with severe COVID? If you are over 90, Jamie, you have to vaccinate 7,000 people to prevent one person being hospitalised with severe COVID. Those figures go into the hundreds of thousands to millions when you get into younger age groups.

JAMIE BARTLETT: Okay. I checked that data and it really does say that. What is this? Is this correct? Because again, it sounds not in keeping with how I understood things.

VIKI MALE: So I think one thing that we really have to remember when we're talking about this is how much the situation has changed since the pandemic.

JAMIE BARTLETT: Aseem is correct, but he's citing data from 2024, a small but vital difference that I didn't notice.

VIKI MALE: So if we look, for example, at the UK data for the autumn of 2022, you only needed to vaccinate 1,357 people to prevent one hospitalisation. You know, it's definitely true that the benefit of being vaccinated against COVID is much less now than it was. And that's because most people have already been vaccinated.

JAMIE BARTLETT: So accurate, but misleading. Dr Aseem thinks the medical profession is ignoring this information. But this data is the reason why the NHS doesn't offer the vaccine to most people under 75 anymore. It doesn't mean the vaccine didn't help during the pandemic. Viki isn't saying that there are no potential negative side effects that come with taking the COVID vaccine, But along with the vast majority of scientists who have looked at this, she says that the data shows that overall, during the pandemic, the benefits outweighed the risks.

VIKI MALE: And in fact, really, the estimates are that about 2.5 million deaths have been averted by COVID vaccination from the beginning of the pandemic up until 2024.

JAMIE BARTLETT: We did what we always do and put Vicky's specific points back to Aseem to give him a chance to respond. He replied, 'Who is the scientist? Who's funding their department? Does their institution receive any funding from Pfizer and/or the Gates Foundation? And how much?' This is one of Aseem's big arguments. It came up repeatedly in our interview.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: It's . . .

JAMIE BARTLETT: (*unclear*)

ASEEM MALHOTRA: . . . you're shaking your head. You're shaking your head.

JAMIE BARTLETT: No, I'm shaking my head because . . .

ASEEM MALHOTRA: It's a no-brainer. It's a no-brainer.

JAMIE BARTLETT: I'm shaking my head because this is what I don't understand. When I look at the majority of what very highly regarded independent scientists say, they all say, 'Yeah, but that . . . you're wrong.' The overwhelming majority of reports . . .

ASEEM MALHOTRA: But can I correct you on that? You need . . .

JAMIE BARTLETT: Yeah.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: . . . to ask about their independence.

JAMIE BARTLETT: Yeah, I . . . well, well . . .

ASEEM MALHOTRA: So hold on, hold on, hold on . . .

JAMIE BARTLETT: No, no . . . no, hang on.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: This is really important. This is really important. This is the word that you are going to misuse, potentially, in the media. I'm being very honest with you now, Jamie, I've heard . . .

JAMIE BARTLETT: Yeah, yeah, no, tell me.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: . . . it so many times.

JAMIE BARTLETT: Yeah, tell me.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: 'Independence'. If you're doing your job properly – and we're recording this now – all the experts you're going to . . . you're going to ask, who will so-called disagree with me, you're going to find out do their institutions take any money from pharma. And they do not bite the hand . . .

JAMIE BARTLETT: But is . . .

ASEEM MALHOTRA: . . . they do not want to bite the hand that feeds them, so . . .

JAMIE BARTLETT: But is that . . . what is . . . what am I supposed to understand from that? That I don't really understand how this world works?

ASEEM MALHOTRA: You have to go upstream.

JAMIE BARTLETT: This argument – it's so difficult to get round. 'My critics are all corrupted by incentives but I am pure.' I've heard that many times before.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: When drug trials are done on any drug, invariably now – it didn't used to be the case before the 80s – they're generally funded and sponsored by the very company that's promoting that product. In the UK, the MHRA takes 86% of its funding from Big Pharma. So that's obviously a bias.

JAMIE BARTLETT: One of Malhotra's biggest criticisms of the whole system, the reason why we're ignoring these papers or probably why, if I talk to you, you're going to give it a certain spin, he'll say, is because there's no independence left anymore in medical research. It's all funded by the big companies that sell the products. Is there some truth in this?

VIKI MALE Speaking for myself, I don't receive any funding from pharmaceutical companies, so everything you have from me is just my own view of the evidence. But what he says about pharmaceutical companies funding Phase 3 trials, that it happens more now than it did in the 1980s, that is actually true.

JAMIE BARTLETT: Viki says the reason drug trials are often funded by Big Pharma is that it's just become so expensive and governments don't want to pay for them using taxpayer money. The exact percentage varies year by year, but it's true that the MHRA is majority funded by the industry it's regulating. However, she says that more than almost any other medicine, the COVID vaccines had large scale public funding. Viki also thinks it's misleading for Aseem to say that the UK drugs regulator, the MHRA, has been 'captured' by Big Pharma. Because that money comes largely from the regulator charging the drugs company a fee to look through the documents before deciding whether or not to grant them a licence.

VIKI MALE: I would liken it really to the driving test. So for example, when I took my driving test, I paid the DVLA, whatever it was at the time, 70 quid, to cover the cost of me taking a driving test. But that doesn't mean that the DVLA were obliged to pass me.

JAMIE BARTLETT: I don't think it's a mad conspiracy theory to be sceptical of the role Big Pharma companies have or the way the funding of trials work. And Big Pharma companies don't exactly have a spotless record.

VIKI MALE: Absolutely you can see why people are a little bit hesitant if they feel that the research is being funded by someone who has a financial interest in it.

JAMIE BARTLETT: At Aseem's request, I did look into it. Imperial College London, where Viki works, publishes an annual list of its biggest donors and he's right, there have been donations made to the institution by Pfizer Limited and the Moderna Charitable Foundation and, as it happens, Gates Ventures. Although as of last year, they're not even in the top 30 biggest donors. But now we're not arguing about the science anymore – we're arguing about hidden plots and secretive motives of powerful companies. And on the specific claims Aseem is making about the COVID vaccine, I don't think they're true. I can't tell you why Aseem says or thinks the things he does. I don't know. But I do know that a lot of people agree with him. And that's not really about him or about the science. It's about all of us. About what and who we trust and how that is changing. As we've heard across this series, we've created a

society that increasingly values stories, emotional truths, clear narratives, even if they're fake. I've listened carefully to both Aseem and Viki, and I'm sorry, Viki, but Aseem's stories about his personal experiences, about dodgy Big Pharma, about the corrupt medical and media elite, are just more exciting. It's a better story. There used to be only a handful of broadcasters, gatekeeping what we saw and heard. They would choose what stories to tell. But now, every single one of us is a broadcaster, able to reach our own audiences, unfiltered, with these stories. But that's not to say that those handful of old broadcasters, 'the legacy media', as Assim calls them, don't share some responsibility for this shift. And I think we at the BBC should be honest about that. So I'm a freelancer. I don't work full-time for the BBC. I present the odd programme like this one. So maybe I see things a bit differently. I personally think traditional media, including the BBC, sometimes does ignore outside perspectives. For example, I always felt like most of the media was a bit too quick to dismiss the idea that COVID leaked from a Chinese lab. Or at least we weren't being seen to interrogate the idea fully. And the concerns about gender clinics or large-scale immigration were easier to avoid. But these were topics that a lot of people really cared about. In my opinion, for the last 30 years or so, places like the BBC have sometimes acted like there was a non-controversial received wisdom in society which they were just reflecting back to the nation. That multiculturalism was a good thing. That immigration was a good thing. That gender self-identification was a good thing. And the people that disagreed were outspoken outsiders with views and prejudices that were easy to ignore. And to a growing number of people, the BBC, understandably, started to look like it was no longer just reflecting opinion but trying to influence it. I don't think that happened through sinister editing or highly biased reporting, but subtly through the stories it covered or didn't cover and the experts it chose.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: (*fading up, unclear*) health policy and senior people, he said, 'Most of my colleagues are getting their information on the COVID vaccine from the BBC.' (*laughter from the audience*) Think about that. The power of the media to shape the way we think, right? And who is ultimately controlling that narrative?

JAMIE BARTLETT: And I wonder if people like Dr Aseem and his story are growing in popularity not because it's factually more true, but because it feels more true in a deeper, more visceral way. His followers feel that places like the BBC, which are meant to be impartial, have pushed a worldview on them that doesn't reflect theirs. And if you believe the BBC is pushing an agenda at you, it means it's easy to dismiss *everything* it says. And therefore people like Dr Aseem seem more trustworthy. Now I can't stop thinking about how Aseem recorded our interview. He worried I might stitch his words together and incorrectly represent his views. 'No,' I said, 'the BBC would never do that.' Ah!

NEWSREADER: President Trump has filed a multi-billion-dollar lawsuit against the BBC over an edit of his speech on 6th January 2021, in a *Panorama* documentary.

JAMIE BARTLETT: Well, I can't really present a series about fakery without mentioning the fact that while I'm making it, it's revealed that the BBC *had* stitched two sections of a Donald Trump speech together in a way that was misleading. The next day, Aseem texted Tom and said, 'I hope you don't do that to me.' I can understand Aseem's scepticism. But the best I can say is that the big boss and the Head of News accepted it was a mistake and both resigned. Whereas, in the world of alternative media, people say things that are wrong all the time, they don't usually resign, they just carry on. Aseem, he doesn't need to put his faith in the BBC to edit him fairly and get his message out anymore. He posts directly on X or YouTube and can speak for hours unedited on Joe Rogan or Stephen Bartlett podcasts.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: From everything I know now, I've reluctantly come to the conclusion that the COVID vaccine introduction has had a catastrophic, net negative effect on society.

JAMIE BARTLETT: I think for a lot of people that feels more honest because there's no one like me making decisions about what you hear. Just because something is unedited, it doesn't make it any truer. But in a world where trust in big institutions like the BBC is falling, I understand why it can seem that way.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: Because of alternative media, because I know there are other outlets, because I've got my own social media platform, I think ultimately, we'll get to a greater truth. People, they make their own decision: who do we trust more? Do we trust Aseem Malhotra and the way he's coming across, at least asking the question, or do we trust the establishment? If I were to lose my medical licence, do you think the voice or power of Aseem Malhotra is going to diminish? It's going to have the opposite effect.

JAMIE BARTLETT: I think he might be right. Because despite everything we've heard, Aseem might be one of the most influential medical professionals in the world, helping shape US scientific policy.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: But you've got the US Administration, under the leadership of Robert Kennedy Jr., who's become a very good friend of mine, who I've worked with closely for the last few years, who have stopped \$500 million worth of investments . . .

JAMIE BARTLETT: Yeah, right.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: . . . into mRNA vaccine technology, okay?

JAMIE BARTLETT: Were you . . . were you influential in that decision?

ASEEM MALHOTRA: I . . . I don't know if that was directly influential, but I know that my communication with Bobby Kennedy has been very much along these lines consistently for some time.

JAMIE BARTLETT: You've been arguing for this?

ASEEM MALHOTRA: Yes, and he's read my papers and he has interviewed me . . .

JAMIE BARTLETT: Right.

ASEEM MALHOTRA: . . . about it and everything else.

JAMIE BARTLETT: Right. *(pause)* This all worries me, because if you think people's relationship with reality is shaky today, we're about to enter a world where you might not know whether anything you hear or see is real or fake.

ALLAN BROOKS: It took over my whole life, right? So I did 300 hours in three weeks, 13 hours a day, didn't eat, barely slept, became a recluse, paranoid thoughts, things I'd never experienced before. Like . . . and I actually believed it, like I actually believe it.

JAMIE BARTLETT: That's next time. *Everything is Fake and Nobody Cares* was written and presented by me, Jamie Bartlett. And the series producer was Tom Pooley. It was a Tempo and Talker production for BBC Radio 4.