

# BBC Complaints - Case Number - CAS-8372760-P5L5Y8

From: BBC Complaints <bbc\_complaints\_website@contact.bbc.co.uk>

To: David Keighley <david@news-watch.co.uk>

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Reference CAS-8372760-P5L5Y8

Dear David Keighley

Thank you for your further communication regarding episode five of Everything Is Fake (and No One Cares). We're sorry that you were dissatisfied by our previous response and consider that it failed to address the substance of your complaint.

We have shared your latest comments with senior staff at Radio 4 and will endeavour to answer your remaining questions.

The statement that the authors of the paper were told to make clear that the paper should not be used to make the kind of claims being made by Dr Malhotra was based on a comparison of the pre- and post-peer reviewed versions of the paper. It is not unreasonable to assume that changes made between the two versions were a requirement of the peer review process. However, even if it were the case that the authors decided that their original claims required some limitation of scope independently, and not as a result of peer review, the underlying point being made here in the programme remains unaltered – specifically that, despite the fact that the paper being cited by Dr Malhotra has been peer reviewed, he is making a claim that the peer-reviewed version of the paper explicitly says it is not designed to evaluate. Therefore, there has been no misrepresentation of the publication, as you suggested might have been the case in your first correspondence.

We are unable to agree that the structure of the programme amounted to a breach of due impartiality. While Dr Malhotra's claims were heard first, and then disputed by Dr Male, Dr Malhotra was subsequently approached by the production team who informed him of Dr Male's criticisms and invited him to provide any further comment. Any relevant further comment was then reflected in the programme. However, impartiality is not a matter of simply hearing two opposing viewpoints and treating them as equals – instead, it requires a weighing of the evidence in an attempt to help the audience establish where the truth may lie. Consequently, it becomes important to identify where views are and aren't supported by data, the views that have relatively marginal support and those that are supported by the scientific consensus. You can read more about the BBC's approach to achieving due impartiality here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/guidelines/impartiality>.

The presenter's consideration of where claims are in line with data or other evidence, and where they resonate more with emotion, is likely to have been understood by the audience as in keeping with the aim of the series as a whole. Across the six episodes, Everything Is Fake (and No One Cares) set out to explore how and why claims, theories and stories which appear to be unsupported by mainstream evidence gain traction.

The epidemiologist mentioned in our previous response is a leading and highly respected UK public health physician and academic. As we stated in our previous reply, he was asked to review the section of the programme relating to the Vaccine paper.

Thank you again for taking the time to write with your questions and concerns. We hope that this clarifies matters.

This concludes Stage 1 of our complaints process. That means we can't correspond with you further here. If you remain unhappy, you can now contact the BBC's Executive Complaints Unit (ECU). The ECU is Stage 2 of the BBC's complaints process. You'll need to explain why you think there's a potential breach of standards, or if the issue is significant and should still be investigated. Please do so within 20 working days of this reply.

Full details of how we handle complaints are available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints/handle-complaint/>.

#### **How to contact the ECU:**

We've provided a unique link for you in this email. This will open up further information about how to submit your complaint. You'll be asked for the case reference number we've provided in this reply. Once you've used the link and submitted your complaint, the link will no longer work.

This is your link to contact the ECU if you wish:

[Click Here](#)

Kind regards

BBC Complaints Team

[www.bbc.co.uk/complaints](http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints)

NB You cannot reply to this email address. This is sent from an outgoing account only which is not monitored.

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