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Failure to disclose conflicts of interest - COVID-19 vaccine deployment report - Royal Society and British Academy

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Cc: press@royalsociety.org, press@thebritishacademy.ac.uk

For the attention of:

Sir Adrian Smith, President of the Royal Society

Dr Venki Ramakrishnan, previous President of the Royal Society 2015-2020

Sir David Cannadine, President of the British Academy

Dear Sir Adrian, Dr Ramakrishnan and Sir David

Serious conflicts of interest were not disclosed when the **COVID-19 vaccine deployment: Behaviour, ethics, misinformation and policy strategies report**[1] was promoted in November 2020.

This Royal Society and British Academy sponsored report supports the deployment of fast-tracked and still experimental 'COVID-19' vaccine products, and calls for dissent about these vaccine products to be suppressed, even calling for criminal prosecutions for 'spreading misinformation'. But who defines what is 'misinformation'?

The COVID-19 vaccine deployment report calls for oppressive action against people questioning COVID-19 vaccination policy, **but fails to disclose that both the Royal Society and British Academy are seriously conflicted in this matter via their funding.**

The Royal Society receives funding[2] **from AstraZeneca, the manufacturer of the Oxford vaccine**[3], **and also from GlaxoSmithKline, another vaccine manufacturer involved with COVID-19 vaccine products.**[4]

The British Academy receives funding from the UK Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)[5], **which is responsible for the Vaccine Taskforce (VTF) which was "set up to drive forward the development and production of a coronavirus vaccine as quickly as possible, bringing together government, academia and industry".**[6]

Sir Adrian, Dr Ramakrishnan and Sir David, **these conflicts of interest should have been clearly disclosed on the COVID-19 vaccine deployment report, and acknowledged in media promotion for the report.**

The Royal Society says **"We are the independent scientific academy of the UK"**[7], and the British Academy says it is **"an independent fellowship of world-leading scholars and researchers"**, but this declared 'independence' is clearly compromised.

Sir Adrian, Dr Ramakrishnan and Sir David, please take steps immediately to ensure conflicts of interest are clearly disclosed in regards to the COVID-19 vaccine deployment: Behaviour, ethics, misinformation and policy strategies report.

I request your response on this matter.

Sincerely

Elizabeth Hart

Independent person investigating the over-use of vaccine products and conflicts of interest in vaccination policy

References (as accessed 4 December 2020):

1. COVID-19 vaccine deployment: Behaviour, ethics, misinformation and policy strategies. The Royal Society and the British Academy. 21 October 2020.
2. The Royal Society. Our donors: <https://royalsociety.org/about-us/funding-finances/support-us/our-donors/>
3. The University of Oxford has entered into a partnership with AstraZeneca on vaccine development, see for example: Safety of the ChAdOx1 nCoV-19 vaccine against SARS-CoV-2: a preliminary report of a phase 1/2, single-blind, randomised controlled trial. The Lancet. Volume 396, Issue 10249, P467-478, August 15, 2020.

4. See for example Medicago and GSK announce start of Phase 2/3 clinical trials of adjuvanted COVID-19 vaccine candidate. GSK press release, 12 November 2020: <https://www.gsk.com/en-gb/media/press-releases/medicago-and-gsk-announce-start-of-phase-23-clinical-trials-of-adjuvanted-covid-19-vaccine-candidate/>
5. "The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) remained the Academy's principal funder, with £27.0m of the Academy's total income of £60.7m coming in the form of the current annual BEIS grant." Financial review. The British Academy Annual Report of the Trustees and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2020.
6. Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy. Transparency data. VTF objectives and membership of the steering group. 24 November 2020: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-vaccine-taskforce-objectives-and-membership-of-steering-group/vtf-objectives-and-membership-of-the-steering-group>
7. Royal Society Home page: <https://royalsociety.org/>
8. About the British Academy: <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/about/>