



Bryan White &lt;zebrafactcheck@gmail.com&gt;

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## Science Feedback review fail

1 message

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**Bryan White** <zebrafactcheck@gmail.com>

Tue, Oct 1, 2019 at 3:59 AM

To: International Fact-Checking Network &lt;factchecknet@poynter.org&gt;, Baybars Orsek &lt;baybars@poynter.org&gt;

Dear IFCN crew,

Unfortunately, the IFCN's review of Science Feedback's fact check of the Lila Rose Facebook video proved wholly inadequate.

[Science Feedback made two criticisms of Rose and both of them failed.](#)

1) Science Feedback said Rose defined abortion incorrectly. But it is a standard literary practice to define terms in the manner one intends to use them. "Fake News" is a good example. As numerous definitions sprang up, fact checkers started explaining what they meant when they used the term (before some ultimately just gave up on using it). Lila Rose is not bound to use the definition Science Feedback elected to use in judging her comments. Though that's enough to settle the point, Science Feedback helped illustrate the bankruptcy of its approach by failing to adhere to its own definition during the course of the fact check. The linked definition said an abortion is removal of the fetus and placenta from the uterus. But Science Feedback went on to claim doctors use abortion to treat tubal pregnancies. Do the doctors believe the Fallopian tubes are part of the uterus? Moreover, the definition Science Feedback offered appears to make safe delivery of a baby via induced labor or caesarean section count as abortion:

Incidentally, abortion is medically defined as a [procedure to end a pregnancy](#) – this definition does not change depending on the reasons for an abortion, i.e. whether the procedure is motivated by an unwanted pregnancy or medical emergency or some other situation has no effect on its medical definition.

Could it be that whether the procedure is intended to deliver a living baby instead of a dead fetus has an effect on its medical definition? Don't ask Science Feedback. It's not on the radar, perhaps because the answer plays to Rose's point.

2) Science Feedback also charged that Rose left out the context revealing the dim prospects for early delivery. But that isn't the case. In fact, Science Feedback used an altered quotation to help make its case, presenting Rose as saying doctors "could do an early delivery if [the mother] is experiencing pre-eclampsia or she has a very severe condition." Presenting Rose as saying doctors "could do" this makes it seem reasonable for the fact checker to charge that Rose makes it look like early successful delivery that might very commonly succeed. But Science Feedback unaccountably omitted a key word from Rose's statement. She said (bold emphasis added): "could **perhaps** do an early delivery ...". And shortly after that Rose averred that the technology does not yet exist to save every fetus delivered early. Science Feedback may have missed that by relying on the shorter of two versions of the video (I haven't found [the short version](#) on Facebook; I assume [the longer version](#) is the relevant version). But I can't imagine any excuse for leaving a key word out of the midst of a quotation. In context, Rose was quite clear that early delivery posed severe challenges to the survival of the fetus. That emphasis served her point in trying to distinguish between methods of ending a pregnancy that directly kill the fetus and methods that result either in a successful delivery or a fetus that fails to survive as an *indirect* result of the procedure.

Science Feedback failed to nail down either charge it leveled against Rose. The fact is the fact checkers did not bother to check what Rose was saying (context respected): that no medical necessity exists for directly killing the fetus. Instead the fact checkers equivocated.

The IFCN must revisit its review of the Science Feedback fact check. It flunks the standards of Science Feedback (which emphasize respecting the context) as well as those of the IFCN.

I've sent a message to Science Feedback recounting these problems. I plan to monitor the story for changes over the next week. If insufficient change occurs the IFCN can expect me to lodge a complaint about Science Feedback.

Thanks for your attention to this matter.

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Sincerely,

7/7/22, 3:38 PM

Gmail - Science Feedback review fail

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