



Bryan White <zebrafactcheck@gmail.com>

You were silent

1 message

Bryan White <zebrafactcheck@gmail.com>

Fri, Jul 8, 2022 at 12:56 PM

To: International Fact-Checking Network <factchecknet@poynter.org>

Cc: Neil Brown <nbrown@poynter.org>, seth@poynter.org

Dear IFCN folks,

In 2019, you investigated a Health Feedback/Science Feedback fact check in the wake of a dispute over its fairness. The fact check had been used to limit the reach of Young America's Foundation's Facebook page.

Your investigation found the fact check did not follow best practices by involving biased experts without disclosure. But otherwise you found nothing wrong with the fact check.

The findings of Science Feedback's fact-check were based on publicly available scientific evidence and as not the result of any bias. The claim that "abortion is never medically necessary" is false and inaccurate.

I sent you an email in 2019 explaining why that ruling was misguided. In keeping with IFCN tradition, I received no response and the message was effectively ignored. The IFCN stuck with its opinion that the conclusions of the fact check were justified.

I pointed out that Science Feedback improperly stuck with a narrow definition of "abortion." Apparently the IFCN Board did not buy my argument, as it did not amend its judgment on Science Feedback. But PolitiFact effectively confirmed my argument in [a June 30, 2022 explainer article](#).

Most of the medical experts we talked to were clear that they don't consider ectopic treatment an abortion.

Compare that line from PolitiFact's article to the way Science Feedback confidently said otherwise:

However, Lila Rose redefines the meaning of abortion to exclude the cases when abortion is medically necessary in order to bolster her claim that "abortion is never medically necessary". This is akin to the [No True Scotsman](#) fallacy in which the definition of a word/phrase is modified from its actual meaning to make a point. For example, Rose claims that treating an ectopic pregnancy is not an abortion, even though termination of the pregnancy is the result of the procedures that treat ectopic pregnancies.

PolitiFact's work undermines Science Feedback's work. If you would not believe me when I used parallel arguments in 2019, then believe PolitiFact. Science Feedback's fact check was always biased and wrong. The IFCN should have recognized that fact back in 2019.

This incident points up a need for IFCN reform. What do you do to keep this from happening? Clearly making Science Feedback responsible for handling appeals of its work should not be expected to work out better. Yet that [represents current Meta/Facebook policy](#), right? The IFCN and its signatories cannot support such a system. Will you do it anyway for fear of losing social media financial support?

Stop with the shameful silence.

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Sincerely,

Bryan W. White
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