

Today's topic—what happens when profit and politics gets involved in the scientific method? Answer: Scientific accuracy goes out the window. This is particularly true when considering complex issues in which even using the scientific method correctly is more difficult.

As is usually the case in this course, I'll provide the overview in this video. You can check out the links to articles and readings to get the details.

1. Tamiflu. Probably doesn't work. The drug companies that make it have been sitting on the research results for years and not publishing them. Reason: too much money to be made.
2. Angioplasty and by-pass surgery. For the vast majority of people these surgeries are not only dangerous but useless. However, they bring in lots of money and are the largest source of income for many hospitals.
3. Cholesterol and heart disease. Cholesterol levels have little if anything to do with heart disease for most people. Inflammation has a lot to do with heart disease. Therefore statins are useless in prolonging life and preventing heart disease and, in fact, have many serious side effects.
4. Does research paid for by drug companies give incorrect information? The data indicate that when the company making the drug is paying for research on the effectiveness of the drug the results will show effectiveness much more often than if someone else, without a profit ax to grind, is paying the bills.
5. How does this relate to climate change? There is lots of money to be made on climate change. Plus, energy companies, most of which promote fossil fuels, want you to believe that their product is not harming the environment.
6. Next time we'll look at the fight to prove the scientific hypothesis that smoking, second hand smoke, and tobacco in general cause cancer. The tobacco companies fought this hypothesis successfully for decades. Some of the same scientists involved with tobacco companies are now involved with energy companies.
7. Am I coming down on the side of Al Gore in this controversy? Not necessarily. It's more complicated than that. So...Stay tuned!