Twitter Thread by (Cyriac) Abby Philips

(Cyriac) Abby Philips
@drabbyphilips

1/

Dr.Thakur, this is a huge issue. Big industry. Powerful lobby. They crush critique wit money power. I hav experienced it first hand.

Here is my story.

Last year March, I published this article based on my experience wit a patient who died after consuming herbalife products https://t.co/UBZRjWxIKE

J Clin Exp Hepatol. Mar-Apr 2019;9(2):268-272. doi: 10.1016/j.jceh.2018.08.002. Epub 2018 Aug 28.

Slimming to the Death: Herbalife®-Associated Fatal Acute Liver Failure-Heavy Metals, Toxic Compounds, Bacterial Contaminants and Psychotropic Agents in Products Sold in India

Cyriac A Philips [1], Philip Augustine [1], Sasidharan Rajesh [1], Solomon K John [1], Gopakumar C Valiathan [1], Jos Mathew [1], Sameer Phalke [2], Kuruveetil L Antony [3]

> So now in the list of QUACKS & AYUSH now we have to deal with these new class of health advisors "GYM Trainers ". They are misguiding youngsters.
> Recently had a young 25 year Male with "DILI". Bilirubin rising Upto 50 with changes of early Cirrhosis. And guess the culprits? pic.twitter.com/Ws1pZDfE4T
>
> — Dr. Thakur Prashant Singh (@drprashant91) December 20, 2020

2/
It went viral on @Twitter
This caught eye of the big company who then proceeded to email me directly regarding my study, asking for proof. I said all my data was in the paper (samples sourced samples frm Amazon from an 'associate seller' 4 analysis)
https://t.co/AgYjhM0i2U

> Analysis of #Herbalife products found:
>
> - Heavy metals
> - Toxic compounds
> - Traces of psychotropic drugs
> - Highly pathogenic bacteria
>
> Likely contributed to liver failure and the death of a 24-year-old woman, who took 3 Herbalife products for 2 months.https://t.co/iz37caqySQ
>
> — Examine.com (@Examinecom) April 29, 2019

3/
They sent a direct letter (written by a prominent professor at Univ of Guelph, Canada / who works with the company) to the publisher #elsevier outlining 'problems' with my study, asking 4 'retraction'. The publisher suggested we provide a rebuttal - which we did, 24 page long.

4/
The rebuttal was strong wit #scientific evidences 2 support our findings, 2 defend their sometimes 'very stupid' concerns. I was astonished it came from a 'professor' & his team. Nonetheless, I did not hear from the Professor or that Univ again. Things calmed down. For a while

5/
Then came a letter to the editor. This time, from a professor working at a company called #planitox which also is funded by Herbalife. Dr Zambrone wrote this letter trying to show weakness in our manuscript. The editor in chief of the journal asked us to reply to that letter.

6/
Our reply was packed with evidence and strong rebuttal. The letter by Zambrone and our reply was published by the journal. Here is the direct link to it https://t.co/CDmwkMnI63
Again #science helped us defend. Things were calm again. For while.

7/
1 day, I receive legal notice from lawyers firm based in #Delhi advising me 2 provide proof of evidence regarding my study, or face heavy legal action, defamation suite. Rightfully, V again answered 'legally' 2 the firms letter. We wer ready to fight it in court.
#medtwitter

8/
They did not respond back. But then did something terrible. They started harassing the journal, its editorial board, served multiple legal notices to them behind our back. This was last straw. The journal editor in chief was threatened and the publisher panicked
#livertwitter

9/
So the journal did a re-review as per COPE guidelines. the re-review of my study came clean and no errors, scientifically

sound, no mistakes were found and review committee advised them to retain the published study. But more legal threats were directed by company to journal.

10/
So without my consent, without my co-authors consent, the journal and the publisher decided to remove the article from all online sources to 'SATISFY' the big company and 'REDUCE' legal tension. So the article now reads. Money won and #science failed. #media
I was miserable

Removal Notice to “Slimming to the Death: Herbalife® Associated Fatal Acute Liver Failure – Heavy Metals, Toxic Compounds, Bacterial Contaminants and Psychotropic Agents in Products Sold in India”, [J Clin Exp Hepatol 9 (2019) 268–272]

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This corrects the article "Slimming to the Death: Herbalife®-Associated Fatal Acute Liver Failure—Heavy Metals, Toxic Compounds, Bacterial Contaminants and Psychotropic Agents in Products Sold in India" in volume 9 on page 268.

This article has been removed: please see Elsevier Policy on Article Withdrawal (https://www.elsevier.com/about/our-business/policies/article-withdrawal).

This article has been removed at the request of the Editor-in-Chief and Indian National Association for the Study of the Liver (INASL).

The article, which was published in the March–April 2019 issue of the journal, has been removed for legal reasons. However the decision to remove the article does not imply admission of any allegation made about the article by any party.

11/
And like that, automatically, the published letter from Zambrone et al and OUR reply to it was also RETRACTED (purely due to pressure, arm twisting) by the publisher and the journal WITHOUT notifying me or my co-authors.
Money won and #science lost. Threats won.



12/
We did everything thru science. Our work was important. It added 2 the growing body of evidence that herbal, nutritional dietary supplements can cause dangerous organ damage in some people. This awareness needs to be raised. Ours is not the first work.
https://t.co/TRxSBYSOlR

13/
We need public awareness. Government support. We need a movement that will take #publichealth to the helm. We need 2 control damaging industries. Keep people's health priority, especially young. Science will help, protect. My patient's story is real
https://t.co/Fdpo6CdZJO

@malini_aisola @pash22 @Shivamda @deralteGaukler @Neurophysik @DrKaloo @Angriy_BiRd @drkamnakakkar @jonathanstea @stethospeaks @compandalt @QuackDetector @DocBastard @GorwayGlobal @d_s_thakur @IMA_MSNIndia @IMAIndiaOrg @Banjotkaur