

Comments on: Plandemic Documentary: The Hidden Agenda Behind COVID-19 by Mikki Willis (v2 05/07/2020)

W. Sean Davidson, Ph.D., Professor and Vice Chair of Research, Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, University of Cincinnati

Summary: This video is an interview with Dr. Judy Mikovits, a Ph.D. virologist and former head of the Whittemore Peterson Institute (WPI) from 2006-2011. In this video, she makes a litany of accusations and assertions around various issues relating to virology, vaccines, and COVID-19. The narrative touches on many individual issues, but the major theme appears to be that a cabal of scientists/doctors and industry leaders are creating and releasing viruses to the public in order to profit off of vaccine treatments for those viruses.

Overall impression: This video is full of vague insinuations and recycled conspiracy theories that are strung together in a flashy narrative with the apparent intent to foment distrust in the institutions of biomedical science. It uses a once respected researcher with reasonable credentials to convey allegedly credible claims. But this researcher has been disgraced by her own co-workers and these claims are usually based on misinformation or half-truths delivered with misleading language or images. Overall, this video makes bogus claims and should be classified as misinformation. Along with many other unfounded conspiracy theories, it does not stand up to scrutiny in an educated, enlightened society. Its continued spread should be strongly discouraged, not by removing it or censoring it, but by encouraging people to think critically and see it for what it is.

As far as I can tell, and it is meandering and confusing in many places, Dr. Mikovits or the producer makes the following charges and insinuations:

- 1) **Fetal and animal tissue research is unleashing deadly viruses upon the public.**
- 2) **That she was imprisoned on the orders of Fauci or his superiors simply because her research contradicted his preferred narrative.**
- 3) **The Bayh-Dole act destroyed science.**
- 4) **There is no vaccine against an RNA virus actually works**
- 5) **COVID-19 was manipulated in a laboratory and released on the public. She also states that animal viruses cannot make the jump to humans.**
- 6) **NIAID (NIH) gave 3.7 million to the Wuhan lab to manipulate and release this virus with the help of American military labs.**
- 7) **She personally “taught” the Ebola virus to infect human cells.**
- 8) **She then pivots to the idea that COVID-19 cases are being over counted among people who should be dying of something else. This is presumably to scare people and control them. Also, to help scientists profit from patented vaccines.**
- 9) **Says current treatment approaches are wrong (ventilators etc.).**
- 10) **Insinuates that a multi-strain flu vaccine that was contaminated with corona viruses caused the COVID-19 outbreak in Italy and this is why so many people died.**
- 11) **States that drugs like chloroquine are purposely being withheld from the public because they actually work but are not profitable enough for the manipulating scientists.**
- 12) **Suggested that the government and Monsanto kept the drug ceramide off the market which would otherwise cure autism.**
- 13) **States that “End all of this and we will have a healthy world again.” Also, we would have huge amounts of money to spend on other things, rather than funnel it to unethical doctors, scientists and corporations who want to profit from vaccines.**
- 14) **States that the goal of these nefarious forces is to prevent access to therapies until all people are infected.**
- 15) **Suggests that the flu vaccine causes susceptibility to corona viruses.**

- 16) The producer replays a “briefing” from two MD’s who assert that social distancing and mask wearing is lowering our immune system and causing all of us to be more susceptible to the virus.
- 17) Claims that beaches should be opened because “the sand has sequences” and the ocean has microbes which will help fight the virus.
- 18) The entire industrial/government/media complex has conspired to shut down dissenting voices.
- 19) Scientists are being controlled by funding agencies and being forced to publish untruths by funding agencies (presumably controlled by Fauci and the like).

Ok, there is a lot here and I will try to comment on each. For some of the recycled stuff, I have copied previous FB posts that I have written on that subject.

On the credibility of Dr. Mikovits: The narrative makes it seem like she worked with or even under Fauci when she was arrested for apparently contradicting his preferred research narrative. This is not true. She was the director of a separate infectious disease institute from 2006 to 2011. Her Wikipedia page indicates that she was working on chronic fatigue syndrome and its possible cause by a virus called XMRV. Working with the co-discoverer of this virus, she looked for this virus in 20 samples of chronic fatigue syndrome patients. She only found the virus in two of the samples, but she and a graduate student were accused of manipulating the data so that 100% were positive. There was an investigation and even her co-authors on the paper found inappropriate contamination in the samples and disavowed the work. Then the journal officially retracted the paper. See the retraction here:

<https://science.sciencemag.org/content/334/6063/1636.1>. I have to tell you, as a scientist if you are forced to retract a paper in such a highly regarded journal, serious questions have to be asked about the quality of the science, the culture in the lab, and the credibility of the authors. So, at the very least, she was suspected of scientific misconduct in this case. She was terminated from her job for refusing to turn over cells that she was sent by mistake. She was arrested for theft after the institute accused her of stealing lab notebooks and other material. She was released 5 days later, and after the institute got some of its notes back, the charges were dropped. This is a good read about the incident: <https://www.chicagotribune.com/nation-world/ct-xpm-2011-11-22-ct-nw-chronic-fatigue-scientist-arrest-20111122-story.html>. So the impression that Fauci had her arrested for no reason is completely misleading. She had been roundly discredited by other scientists and even her own co-authors prior to the arrest. My take is that her credibility is extremely low. I will not speculate on her motives. I am just going to stick to facts here.

On the credibility of Mikki Willis: Willis seems to own Elevate Media, a company which produces movies and short clips for social media. His videos tend to have themes of expose’s. He has a large social media footprint, but his other videos do not seem too wacky or off the wall to me, at least from a casual google search. He would seem to have more credibility than most viral video producers. But it has to be understood that a major part of his business model is producing content that has a high chance to go viral. Well researched and fact supported documentaries may not be as exciting as those that may play fast and loose with facts and evidence.

Claims one by one:

- 1) **Fetal and animal tissue research is unleashing deadly viruses upon the public.** I engineer bacteria for a living. It is not exactly the same as manipulating viruses, but it uses very similar techniques. To do this, you have to start with the basic building blocks of what is already there. Anytime you make changes to the DNA, you have to engineer in changes that allow you to make further changes to affect gene function. This leaves fingerprints that are unmistakable. But these have not been found in the virus causing COVID-19. There was undoubtedly a "zoonotic" transfer of the virus or its precursor from animals into humans. She says this does not happen, but it is well established for the other two pandemics we had recently - SARS (civet cats) and H5N1 which is aptly named the Bird Flu from its originating animal. We know for a near certainty, COVID-19 was not “taught” in a lab to infect humans. If you think about it, this particular virus would make a very poor weapon. It has a latent, asymptomatic phase, low death rate (relative to something like anthrax) and long incubation time. I realize that it is unwise to trust all info coming out of China, but this conspiracy theory doesn't pass the common sense test. Here's some light coffee table reading on this from one of the premier scientific journals in the

world: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41591-020-0820-9>. It is (remotely) possible that the natural form of the virus was stored in Wuhan and released either on purpose or by accident. But this would contradict the narrative that there are teams of scientists out there creating new viruses to infect people so they can be cured by patented vaccines. It is much more likely that natural 'experimentation' is ongoing in the form of constant cycles of mutation every time the virus replicates. Eventually, over years and millions of mutations, a version arises that can make the jump from animals to humans. This is what viruses do. This claim is bogus.

- 2) **That she was imprisoned by Fauci or his superiors simply because her research contradicted his preferred narrative.** Fauci is said to have blocked her publication and directed a cover up of any dissent from his vision by "paying off" other researchers using funding from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID). He and Gallo, are accused of holding up her paper while rushing to publishing first, taking credit for her ideas and so that they could obtain patents during the delay. This delay supposedly cost "millions" of lives. I cannot find much information on this fight with Fauci. There can be bizarre dynamics in science. Otherwise reasonable people can get very bent out of shape by arguments over authorship and research credit. But, as I laid out above, Dr. Mikovits wasn't imprisoned for anything related to AIDS or even COVID research at the NIH, it was around her work on Chronic Fatigue Syndrome of which Fauci was not involved as far as I can tell. Now, there was probably some pretty petty stuff going on (sounds like on both sides) over the dispute with the institute about taking research records, but the insinuation that she was being persecuted by Fauci seems very farfetched.
- 3) **The Bayh-Dole act destroyed science.** This act allows researchers who make discoveries using taxpayer dollars to retain ownership of those discoveries for patent purposes. The documentary is correct in that it did lead to a huge increase in patents by Universities and Research Institutes. And, yes, financial incentives do lead to questionable decision making by both scientists and universities on occasion. I also concede that financial conflicts of interest must be taken into account when health policy experts have them. But the Bayh-Dole act actually incentivizes discovery. Think about it, what are you going to work harder on, a life-saving discovery that allows you to gain a financial benefit for your hard work or a discovery where all the proceeds go to the government? This law has been credited with helping the US become the leader that it is in scientific research. It should also be known that this law has a "march in" codicil that allows the federal government to intervene to take over implementation of discoveries that are deemed critical to the public interest. Also, and this is very seldom mentioned, all of us scientists have to sign an agreement with our institutions that gives what's called first right of refusal to our parent university or institute. In other words, most times the university gets paid - not the individual researcher. Yes, some of that money can come back to the scientist's lab and sometimes the university and scientist team up to start a company or similar. But the point is that scientists aren't driven solely (or even mostly) by the promise of financial gain from a discovery. You can choose to not believe me if you like, but just sit down and talk to any scientist and ask what motivates them. So this claim is also bogus, though there are clearly instances of abuse.
- 4) **No vaccine against an RNA virus actually works.** This is a stunning falsehood. The flu is caused by an RNA virus. Remember when you went to Walgreens to get your flu shot? That vaccine, though not always consistent from year to year, has been shown in trial after trial to prevent at least some flu infections. This statement is completely inaccurate, and should tip you off to the credibility of this person. I tried to find references that were not from CDC or NIH since these institutions are being called into question in this video. Here is a study in the Lancet, a highly respected international journal:
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S147330991170295X>
- 5) **COVID-19 was manipulated in a laboratory and studied.** Notice the use of the language she used in this part of the video. She specifically said labs "manipulated and studied" the virus. This could mean isolated and grown (which is probably truthful). But what she is dishonestly implying here is that scientists manipulated its sequence and its ability to infect humans. This is just not the case as indicated above. This claim is willfully misleading.
- 6) **NIAID (NIH) gave 3.7 million to the Wuhan lab to manipulate and release this virus with the help of American military labs.** This is a common conspiracy theory that is making the rounds. It is rooted in truth in that the NIAID did give NIH money to a consortium called the EcoHealth Alliance, an international organization whose

mission is to study disease interactions between humans and animals. This is a good faith effort to understand how viruses jump from animals to humans. If we are going to learn from this and prevent it in the future, we have to understand how it is happening. This organization then distributes some of its money to individual labs including those in the US, Europe and, yes, China. It would be irresponsible to not study this issue in China where there have been so many documented zoonotic transfers. But, only about \$700K of that money went to the Wuhan lab. Here is an article from USA Today on this:

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/factcheck/2020/05/04/fact-check-obama-administration-did-not-send-3-7-m-wuhan-lab/3061490001/>. This claim is highly misleading.

- 7) **She personally “taught” the Ebola virus to infect human cells.** This one is mystifying. The first cases of Ebola virus (in humans) were documented in 1976 in the Ebola region of Africa. According to her bio, Dr. Mikovits was graduating high school at that time. This claim is beyond bogus.
- 8) **She pivots to the idea that COVID-19 cases are being over counted among people who should be dying of something else.** This is also a common conspiracy theory. While it is true that, due to the fast pace of deaths, the CDC has relaxed its definition of a COVID death to persons that had the disease (i.e. tested positive) at the time of death, there is little question that the virus is accelerating the death of these individuals. The argument that most COVID deaths are probably people who would have died anyway is not only heartless, but irrelevant. If I am fighting cancer, you can bet that I want to keep on living just as much as you do. If COVID comes along and kills me in my weakened state, it’s just as tragic as if it killed an initially healthy person. If someone shoots a terminal cancer sufferer in the street, is that gunman not arrested for murder? Also, there are many reports from health care workers on the front lines who are overwhelmed and treating COVID patients and are winning some battles and losing others. The video leaves the impression that all front line docs feel they are being forced to follow an ineffective treatment paradigm. Bodies are being stacked up in unrefrigerated trucks in some places. This doesn’t happen if a pandemic is made up or overblown by manipulating death certificates or pressuring doctors. The idea that scientists and doctors are making money off of this is also just not true. First, the costs that hospitals have incurred to rearrange treatment areas, perform testing, PPE purchases, etc. far outweigh any extra Medicare money for the patients. Also, most hospitals are seriously losing money right now because profitable elective surgeries are shut down. At UC, our clinicians are actually taking a 20% pay cut. They are not profiting off of this virus. Finally, she ignores the idea that we do not yet have a vaccine for COVID-19. So it is not being sold and no one is making any money off of it. This claim is mostly bogus, and also heartless.
- 9) **Says current treatment approaches are wrong (ventilators etc.).** This one might have some kernel of truth to it. I am not an MD, so I am not going to wade too far in here, but I have seen reports that oxygen therapy, changing patient positions, hydration etc. seem to be relatively helpful. Ventilators are a last resort when lungs become too inflamed and fill with fluid and the patient is literally drowning. However, the implication that somehow the entire medical community has been fooled into following intentionally ineffective treatment strategies is just not believable. I have a good friend who is an ER doc in Chicago. He is the kind of guy who will try anything he thinks will work and is not being led around by the AMA, big corporations, the NIH, or anyone else. This claim may be rooted in some truth with respect to ventilators, but is overall bogus, not to mention insulting to our frontline healthcare workers.
- 10) **Makes a vague insinuation that a multi-strain flu vaccine that was contaminated with corona viruses caused the COVID-19 outbreak in Italy and this is why so many people died.** Her Wikipedia page suggests that she has made a lot of hay about corona virus contamination in vaccine preparations. This may or may not be true as I cannot seem to find much credible information on this. But here is the logic problem. She says that Italians received a multi-strain version of the flu vaccine and this made them more susceptible to COVID-19. But the way the immune system works is that if it is exposed to something, it creates antibodies to fight it. So if anything, corona virus contamination in a vaccine should help with COVID-19. She may be intimating that the vaccine directly caused COVID-19, but doesn’t directly say that. Again, this is a vague claim that is highly bogus. Especially since it is doubtful that Italy was the only country that used this vaccine.
- 11) **States that drugs like chloroquine are purposely being withheld from the public because they actually work but are not profitable enough for the manipulating scientists.** This simply isn’t true. Chloroquine and its

derivatives are, in fact, readily available as they are used for treating things like malaria, rheumatoid arthritis and lupus. Many doctors are using it to try to treat COVID-19 right now. The problem is that it may not work. The VA just reported (granted, pre peer review) a study that compared regular treatment, chloroquine alone or chloroquine with azithromycin. Admittedly a small study (these things are moving fast), but it was one of the few studies that had a real control group. There was a good summary of this in the AP (<https://apnews.com/a5077c7227b8eb8b0dc23423c0bbe2b2>). Bottom line, no decrease in deaths (both chloroquine groups trended higher in fact) and there was a trend for increased organ damage from chloroquine. This fits with other recent small studies. The NIH has released treatment guidelines that recommend not using this drug for this purpose. They haven't removed it from the market or forbidden its use for COVID by doctors. They are simply trying to give the best guidance with what we know. This claim is demonstratively bogus.

- 12) Suggested that the government and Monsanto kept the drug ceramide off the market which would otherwise cure autism.** I cannot find any information on this. If she did say ceramide, I happen to know firsthand that this sphingolipid is readily available as I have a bottle of it sitting in my lab. If she meant another drug, I can't comment because it is not clear what she is talking about. From what I have read, she has come under criticism from other scientists for making unfounded leaps from her viral studies to other diseases including autism. This may be part of this. This claim is as yet unverifiable, at least by me.
- 13) States that "End all of this and we will have a healthy world again." Also, we would have huge amounts of money to spend on other things, rather than funnel it to unethical doctors, scientists and corporations who want to profit from vaccines.** To me, this was the most fantastical quote from the entire video. Under normal circumstances, most of us die from chronic diseases such as heart disease and cancer etc. Even if all viruses were completely wiped off the face of the earth, people would still smoke, overeat, take opioids, etc. The idea that, if we could end the nefarious virus production and mass infection machine, all individuals would be healthy is just plain unrealistic. This assertion is not only bogus, but an example of magical thinking.
- 14) States that the goal of these nefarious forces is to prevent access to therapies until all people become infected.** This claim has a fundamental flaw in logic. We don't have a working vaccine for this virus yet, hence nobody can sell one. It doesn't make sense to wait until all people are infected before you spring a vaccine on them. It should work the other way around. If I am an evil Dr. Fauci, I would only want to infect a few people first, then sell the vaccine to the vast masses that have not yet become infected and are afraid. Also, it is common for the body to maintain an immunity to a virus for a period of time after an exposure. We do not know if this is the case for the virus that causes COVID-19 yet, but why take the risk of giving everyone that immunity by infecting them before selling them your vaccine? This claim is just not internally logical.
- 15) Suggests that the flu vaccine causes susceptibility to corona viruses.** Notice the language she used here. She cited a study and said that it showed that a flu vaccine used in the military made soldiers more susceptible to 'corona viruses'. She did not specifically state COVID-19, but she clearly meant to convey that impression. I haven't been able to find the exact paper that they pictured in the video, but I found a description of it that says it DID NOT look at COVID-19. Here is a nice debunking of that whole idea: <https://healthfeedback.org/claimreview/claim-that-flu-vaccine-increases-coronavirus-infection-is-unsupported-misinterprets-scientific-studies/>. This claim is willfully misleading with no direct supporting evidence.
- 16) The producer replays a "briefing" from two MD's who assert that social distancing and mask wearing is lowering our immune system and causing all of us to be more susceptible to the virus.** This one has been batted down many times. The doctors are grossly under estimating the resiliency of the immune system by stating that a month or two in a germ-poor environment will rob us of our immune defense. They also take major liberties with math. Here is a fantastic debunking of this briefing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zpczagv3oTg&feature=youtu.be&app=desktop>
- 17) Claims that beaches should be opened because "the sand has sequences" and the ocean has microbes which will help fight the virus.** There is absolutely no evidence that exposure to sand and sea water will help one fight a contagious pathogen. I understand the point about being exposed to numerous environmental antigenic determinants (fancy word for germs) to build up your immune system, but if going to the beach exposes you to

sick people, one assumes a much higher risk of getting sick. It's like saying that you can't catch the flu from other people if you are in a health food store. This claim is just not supportable.

18) The entire industrial/government/media complex has conspired to shut down dissenting voices. Back in the 70's and 80's, most people tuned into 3 major networks for their news. Now there is a mind bogglingly diverse sources for news (and fake news) available to anyone who wants it. No one entity can control the whole narrative. The fact that you are able to see this video in itself debunks the claim that there is an organized conspiracy to hide the truth from not only Americans, but people all over the world. Additionally, it appears that Dr. Mikovits makes regular speaking appearances to relay her ideas (see her Wikipedia page). It seems more likely that true things (that can be verified over and over) tend to get reported while untrue things may initially get reported but fall by the wayside when they don't hold up to scrutiny. This claim can never be completely refuted because one is forced to use allegedly manipulated information to try to refute it. But common sense dictates otherwise.

19) Scientists are being controlled by funding agencies and being forced to publish untruths by (presumably masterminded by Fauci and corporations). I have direct experience here. I write grants to fund my research, both to the government and to industry. The thing you should understand is that most of the decisions about what gets funded are not made by some government bureaucrat sitting behind a desk. Grants undergo rigorous review by scientists from the scientific community (i.e. not employed by the government). We are brought in to score grants to advise the government on what is the best science to fund. The government has the ultimate choice on what it funds, but it simply cannot go to a researcher and say "We don't like your results, we want you to change your conclusions and here is a grant if you do it". This just doesn't happen. I would estimate that 90% of the funding decision is made by non-government scientists. I regularly sit on these review panels and have seen the process first hand. If you could actually see the volume of grants that are processed by the federal government, and see the staffing levels they have to do it, you will quickly realize that the government couldn't push a specific scientific narrative even if it wanted to. Similar for companies. I have been funded by companies who have definite agendas and interests in how the science turns out. Whenever I enter into these contracts, I make it explicitly known (on paper) that the results will be published exactly as they come out. In fact, I am sure I have lost potentially nice grants because of this. Now, does this get abused? Sure. Scientists are human and they are subject to the same foibles that all humans have, regardless of vocation. But these instances are rare. Furthermore, if someone gets caught publishing data under inappropriate influences, they rapidly become pariahs in the scientific community. I can't prove any of this to you. But what I do know is that scientists, particularly academic scientists and certainly those working for the government, did not get into this business for money. In fact, most scientists are ferociously independent and react with hostility if someone tries to limit them or control their thinking. If you doubt this, sit in on a departmental faculty meeting in any institution in the country. Last point, probably less than 1 in 100 academic scientists ever make a discovery that leads directly to a drug or vaccine that can make them money. The way the system works is that each scientist puts in their contribution, then other scientists use those pieces to build new ideas, then eventually a big breakthrough comes - likely many years down the road. The idea that this process can be controlled by Tony Fauci or even the US government just isn't realistic.

Note: My motivations here are not financial or political. I am deeply concerned about the effect that misinformation is having on our country and on trust in our governmental and scientific institutions. My mission here is to promote critical evaluation of information, regardless of source. I am a cardiovascular scientist and trained critical thinker, but I am not a virologist or practicing physician. As such I have worked to not overstep bounds in those areas. But you should know that I am a card carrying, and proud, member of the US biomedical research community. Thus, I am highly motivated to defend the awesome men and women who have built the greatest research infrastructure in the world for the benefit of the people of the United States. Call it a conflict of interest if you must. I can assure you, however, that I haven't made one cent off of this virus. If you find a factual mistake in this document, please contact me at Sean.Davidson@UC.edu and I will respond.