

# Chapter 32:

*Interview with*  
**Dr. David Lewis, Ph.D**



**Dr. Lewis:** As a senior level research microbiologist, I was involved in directing research projects on everything from climate change to pollutants in the environment. I got the chance to see from the inside how science is funded by the federal government, through grants to universities, to be published in the scientific literature. Having seen how the system worked, I became concerned about the process that science, within the EPA, and I saw the same thing at the CDC, the FDA, other federal agencies, and at the universities that they funded, was all geared towards supporting certain government policies and industry practices.

Scientists who published data that supported the government's policies and certain industry practices that were economically important became promoted, they freely published in the scientific literature, whereas if data were generated and researched that raised questions about certain government policies or industry practices, that research would be suppressed, their research would not be published.

It was a system of using public funds in that manner that led me to keep a lot of records. I ended up filing a number of lawsuits, whistleblower lawsuits, in order to keep being able to do my research regardless of what the outcome was. My book *Science for Sale* documents that experience over my career.

The issue of vaccine safety is an issue that I firsthand saw that certain government agencies and certain universities are manipulating the data in order to protect the sales of vaccines and to cover up any adverse effects. I have worked in that area since 2011 and spent a lot of my time getting to the bottom of how those data are being handled.

**Interviewer:** We've been looking at various cases, particularly a couple of cases we've looked at where the science of vaccines and what it's doing. Vaccine injuries have been totally disregarded, ignored and pushed aside. You've traced that back and you've seen different cases where those things have been proven, and you've documented them. Could you share any feedback on that?

**Dr. Lewis:** Well, I can tell you the specific case that I spent most of my time getting to the bottom of was a case of Dr. Andrew Wakefield and the research that he published in *Lancet*. The studies documented the fact that a number of parents linked their children's autism to the MMR vaccine.

I investigated the original data involved in that case that were published in the *Lancet*. What caught my attention was a massive news media coverage of fraud, supposedly, on the part of Dr. Andrew Wakefield in that study.

I was able to go back and obtain a lot of the original documents in those experiments that the *British Medical Journal* claimed did not exist. When I reviewed those documents, I found that it was clear that Dr. Wakefield had not committed any research fraud. I presented the results of my investigation on a panel discussion at Harvard University in 2011 showing that the evidence disputed the claims of research fraud against Dr. Wakefield.

That happens to be a topic of particular interest to me because the fact is that both government and industry are increasingly using false allegations of research misconduct to discredit scientists who raise questions about government policies and industry practices. It's something that I experienced myself. When I published research that questioned an EPA policy, then a large corporation in the business, I was looking at an environmental issue, land application of sewage sludge, accused me of research misconduct. That went through a couple of years of litigation before EPA was able to prove that the allegations were false.

Oftentimes, even when a scientist is vindicated after such accusations, recovering their ca-

reer is difficult. That is an area that for the National Whistleblowers Center in Washington, DC, I have worked for a number of years to investigate numerous cases where that occurs. Vaccine safety is one of those areas where it commonly occurs.

**Interviewer:** I met your wife last night and you've been involved in this together. Is that true? She's supporting you here at this event?

**Dr. Lewis:** Yes. My wife and children were the first individuals I consulted with when I was faced with blowing the whistle on corruption of science at EPA, because I knew it would cost me my career in science there and they were going to have to bear the burden of any economic consequences just like I would. So I had to find out whether we all were on the same page on this.

**Interviewer:** Were they on the same page?

**Dr. Lewis:** Absolutely. They are. Have been and are. Cathy has been a huge support to me because she's a very people-oriented person. Where I go to conferences and talk about science, she's out there meeting all the people, and she brings a lot of people to me that turn out to be important links in my work in this area. So she's a vital part of my efforts these days to educate the public on how science is done.

**Interviewer:** When she came back to you and she said—and then your family and children, they all said yes to you, obviously, it was a burden on your heart. Probably, I can imagine it was hard for you to share with them what you were thinking about doing.

**Dr. Lewis:** It was not difficult on my part.

**Interviewer:** Okay. But then when they accepted and they said, "Yeah, we'll support you with this, even though it's going to be hard for us, but we're willing to support you. We trust and believe." Because they don't know your area like you know it, and so they had to just trust, "We know our dad. We know our husband. He knows his stuff. He's standing for what he believes in." They stood by you. What did it mean for you to have that support?

**Dr. Lewis:** Well, it means everything. It was not like I had any question about it. Cathy and our two boys, Josh and Jed, are of the same mind and heart I am. What is best for others is at the forefront of what motivates us in everything we do. It's a clear-cut issue. I think every scientist working for the government or for industry, or for academia, makes either consciously or subconsciously, whether they're going to be in for it for themselves or for others. My wife and two children, if I can think of anything that's more characteristic of them, is that they put others first above themselves. I just mainly wanted to have a little discussion with them about how this might play out financially and in other ways.

There hasn't been really any surprises. I think that's an important part of success, is everybody knowing what's ahead, what might come, and being prepared for it.

**Interviewer:** Well, I appreciate you.

**Dr. Lewis:** So, it's not that big of a deal.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, cool. Well, that's awesome. I just really appreciate that because families that stand by each other through these things I think is really meaningful. I think that that's a big part of the key to this, the answer to this question.

I think there's a lot of wives that are passionate about this, and their husbands are resis-

tant, and vice versa, and then children to parent. And that unity that your family had is a great example of what—so we're looking at a man, but then we've got the woman behind the man with Cathy and then your two boys that really have given you that home and that network of love and support to be like a springboard and a launching pad for you, and that's just awesome.

**Dr. Lewis:** Yeah. Well, more than that, our two boys went on to college to become scientists themselves. Having them going through school and graduate school has been a huge resource for me. Both of them are biologists. I go to them almost on a daily basis to get not just feedback on things in general, but on the specifics of what has changed in different areas of science. They're like colleagues at this point.

**Interviewer:** Are you proud of them?

**Dr. Lewis:** I could not be more proud of them. I wish I was half as smart as they are. It gives me a lot of hope for the future. Some of our children that are coming up now.

**Interviewer:** Well, yeah, that's awesome. It's lovely to hear. Then your boys, as smart as they are, just knowing that their dad's proud of them is still would give them strength. I know what it's like myself and you know what it's like with your relationships, the relationship you had with your father.

That's a blessing that you give. I just sensed that when I first met you as well. Like the way you spoke to me, I sensed a blessing. I could tell that you were a father. I just really appreciate that.

**Dr. Lewis:** I appreciate that very much. Speaking of my father, I talked with him before he passed away, and asked him if there was anything he regretted about his life. He didn't hesitate. He just said he wished he'd been a lot nicer to a lot more people.

But you know I can't think of anybody other than my father who was nicer to people. And I thought about how that at the end of my life, I'd like to look back and feel like I'd been as good to other people as I could. That's been a guiding light in my life, and certainly in my wife's life, and our children's lives.

I think people think about science as being facts and cold and hard, intellectual pursuit, but it's not really. Hardly anything we do, including in science, does not have an impact on other people. That's what protecting public health and the environment is all about. It's what vaccines are supposed to be about, protecting our health.

But when you go to work for a university or government agency and you find out it's not really about that in the real world, it's about making money, that's an eye-opener. And you can either bail out or the choice I took was to stay in the system and fight it, learn about it, pass that information on to others, and hopefully, they can, in a more educated way, deal with it.

**Interviewer:** Thanks for everything you've shared. I really appreciate it. I only, obviously, have just met you, but there is obviously a sense and a conviction in something that you intuitively know, and it's the passing wish of your father and the desire that you have to be that gift to other people's lives. You've been it in the past. You are it today. And you will be it in the future. I see that. We're just lucky to have someone like you in the world. So, thank you for everything you've done.

**Dr. Lewis:** Thank you, Jonathon. I appreciate it very much. It's not anything of myself. I draw on the strength of not only my family but so many others I run into who do far more than I do that

are an inspiration to all of us. It's a shared experience, and we're all in this together.

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