

Fixing Wikipedia's "EFT" Article

Below is an article written by Dawson Church about Wikipedia's biased and misleading EFT entry.

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The history of science is littered with examples of technology driving discovery. Seventeenth century Dutch tradesman Anton von Leeuwenhoek was one of my teenage heroes. Leeuwenhoek perfected the art of grinding magnifying lenses, and began describing the curious microorganisms he saw through them. He began reporting his findings to the newly-formed Royal Society in England; his letters, translated into English, also contained painstaking drawings of the organisms he observed. While contemporary microscopes could magnify to only about 30x, Leeuwenhoek obsessively ground very fine lenses that could magnify an object by up to 200x.

Like Galileo and so many other pioneers, Leeuwenhoek's discoveries were first greeted with hostile skepticism by many members of the Royal Society. This skepticism-whether it was the doctors of Vienna pillorying Ignaz Semmelweis for washing his hands between patients, or the Catholic Church forcing Galileo to repent his heretical view that the earth orbited the sun-has impeded the progress of science for centuries.

This observation led German physicist Max Planck to remark that science progresses one funeral at a time. Existing "experts" cling to their outdated worldviews, and not till a new generation has displaced them is there a more open intellectual climate in which new ideas can thrive.

Unlike the leaps and bounds made by science since the Renaissance, the attitude of skeptics has remained rooted firmly in the anti-scientific superstition of the fourteenth century. If you'd like to read a comically embarrassing modern-day example, look up "EFT" on Wikipedia. Several years ago, a group of skeptics seized editorial control of most of the CAM (complementary and alternative medicine) pages on Wikipedia.

The early articles were written mostly by experts in their fields. The skeptics deleted those articles, and wrote their own. They tag EFT and other therapies as "pseudoscience," and whenever experts attempt to correct them, for instance by adding a description of a study newly published in a peer-reviewed journal, the skeptics suppress the amendment.

A popular misconception is that anyone can edit a Wikipedia page; in reality many entries are controlled by informal committees of editors, who can band together around a common philosophy, such as closed-minded hostility to CAM, or anti-scientific skepticism. These self-appointed gatekeepers can then dictate what goes on a page, depriving the public using the encyclopedia from reading authoritative, balanced and objective coverage of a topic, entries written by experienced and qualified experts.

With ignorance and skepticism wielding the editorial pen, the only study described in some detail in Wikipedia's EFT article is a single very early study by Waite and Holder. This investigation is so flawed that it can be interpreted as either proving or disproving EFT. It was published in a fringe journal linked to another fringe publication, the *Skeptical Inquirer*.

Having demonstrated their worldview by tagging EFT as "pseudoscience" in the first section, how do they then deal with the inconvenient fact that there are more than 20 clinical trials showing EFTs efficacy? Their solution is to simply not mention them in the article. Since the data doesn't support their prejudices, they ignore it.

Wikipedia allows the reader to peer behind the entry to the history of additions and deletions to the article, and the skeptical editors are perfectly clear, in these discussions, about their worldview. When new studies are published in peer-reviewed medical or psychology journals, the editors state that they should not be included in the Wikipedia article, since this might lend credibility to EFT which in their eyes it does not have. They elevate their own opinions above the facts.

There is no mention in the Wikipedia article, or the behind-the-scenes discussions, of the standards for empirically validated therapies published by the APAs Division 12 Task Force. There is no reference to the evidence-based criteria embraced by the US government's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP), or any description of the randomized controlled trials that have demonstrated EFTs efficacy for PTSD, depression, pain, anxiety, phobias, and other conditions.

None of the authors of the article seems to even be aware that such standards exist. None of the Wikipedia editors have any training or certification in EFT. They do not appear to have read the full copies any of the research published in peer-reviewed journals, and are certainly unable to interpret or explain a scientific paper. One of these gatekeepers calls EFT "claptrap," and deletes references to balanced peer-reviewed papers in journals published by the American Psychological Association, in favor of the Waite and Holder study.

Having individuals who are not only ignorant, but hostile to scientific enquiry, write an encyclopedia entry on an evidence-based healing modality used by several million people, is like asking the Vatican to write the entry on birth control. You get an opinion, but you don't get the facts. Imagine a decent encyclopedia, perhaps the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, writing an article by assembling an

editorial team with complete ignorance of the topic, hostility to the field, scientific illiteracy, and no relevant academic qualifications. If the article's topic was the nature of the solar system, the team would contain not a single astronomer, physicist, or geologist, and every member would belong to the Flat Earth Society.

Absurd though it may seem, that's how the Wikipedia entry for EFT is created. Wikipedia's bias against natural and alternative medicine has been noted by several journalists. As comedian Tina Fey remarked, "When you're contemplating open-heart surgery, imagine your reaction to a guy who says, 'I don't have any of those fancy degrees from Harvard Medical School. I'm just an unlicensed plumber with a dream. Now hand me the scalpel.'"

When Wikipedia articles are written by qualified experts, such as the entries for a method called Schema Therapy, or the entry for Emotionally Focused Therapy, they are excellent and informative. Dawson Church, David Feinstein, and other experts have written a new Wikipedia entry which is objective, balanced, and informative, and we hope to replace the "sun revolves around a flat-earth" version with this expert version soon.

Van Leeuwenhoek persisted despite the skepticism, and eventually began to correspond with Britain's Royal Society, at that time the most prestigious association in the world for the advancement of scientific enquiry. Though he never wrote a book, he eventually exchanged hundreds of letters with members of the Royal Society. His curiosity was boundless, and he used his microscopes to examine organisms existing everywhere from ponds to human saliva.

As the evidence mounted, the nonsensical superstitions of the skeptics were swept away, and van Leeuwenhoek gained a secure place in scientific history. In the same way, the fanciful mirages of the Wikipedia anti-scientists will soon be replaced with solid fact, and the public will gain a reliable source of information about EFT and other energy therapies in this very influential forum.