



## Science is becoming increasingly unscientific

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Researchers are increasingly seeking grants and tenure at the expense of sound science, argues Patrick J. Michaels in Investors Business Daily.

Michaels, a scholar with the libertarian Cato Institute, was commenting on an article recently published in a journal from Britain's Royal Society. The article, titled "The Natural Selection of Bad Science," explains that rewards for scientists have polluted the scientific process.

"The things that scientists crave – like tenure and research funding – incentivize frequent publishing of massive numbers of academic papers," Michaels wrote. "To publish that much, you need a tremendous amount of financial support. And when it comes to scientific work that could have regulatory implications, almost all of the money comes from Washington."

Michaels uses the example of climate science throughout his article, which is being heavily funded and incentivized to find dire predictions.

"So, instead of being rewarded for research that supports a prior hypothesis, no matter how sloppy it is, those involved in climate studies get published a lot not by testing (which can't be done in the prospective sense) but by producing dire, horrific results," Michaels wrote. "Because these often appear in prominent journals — which love to feature articles that generate big news stories — the greater the horror, the more likely is promotion, citation and more money."

He also cites Stanford University researcher Daniele Fanelli, who found that positive results in research have been increasing for decades, which can't possibly be true. It's just not possible that we are able to propose a hypothesis and prove it true at such a high rate. But people who give money to scientists are funding the hypothesis, not the results. Negative findings are a waste of their money, so scientists are increasingly ensuring they prove their hypotheses true.

Imagine you want funding to prove that soda causes heart disease. Do you think the financial backers would be happy to learn soda *doesn't* cause heart disease? Not unless the funders were from the soda industry, but they wouldn't likely fund a study with such a hypothesis in the first place. By the way, a study like this has been conducted, and the Google results show just how important finding positive results are — the more media headlines a "study" can create, the more funding.

It's why you often see just one study on the subject. The headlines have been generated, there's no need to conduct more research. Occasionally, however, dissenting science is conducted that disproves the original headline (though it's rare). Remember just last year when all your

Facebook friends were sharing an article claiming eating chocolate every day could help you lose weight? That was a hoax perpetrated by people who wanted to show just how easy it was to fool people using "junk science." Clearly their scheme worked.

We know it's no longer enough to say that people care about the science above all else, not when money and jobs are on the line. People *should* be skeptical of a lot of the studies being released today. It's so hard to determine which ones are real and which ones are pseudoscience.