

How Nonprofit and Government Organizations Are Unintentionally Funding the Misinformation Machine through Programmatic Advertising

A Report for the European Commission

May 30, 2023



Dozens of nonprofit and government organizations are supporting websites that traffic in misinformation — including some that directly contradict the stated missions of those organizations — by running programmatic advertising on those sites.

In April and May 2023, NewsGuard identified **108** programmatic ads from **57** nonprofit and government organizations that appeared on **50** websites that have been found by NewsGuard to repeatedly spread misinformation.

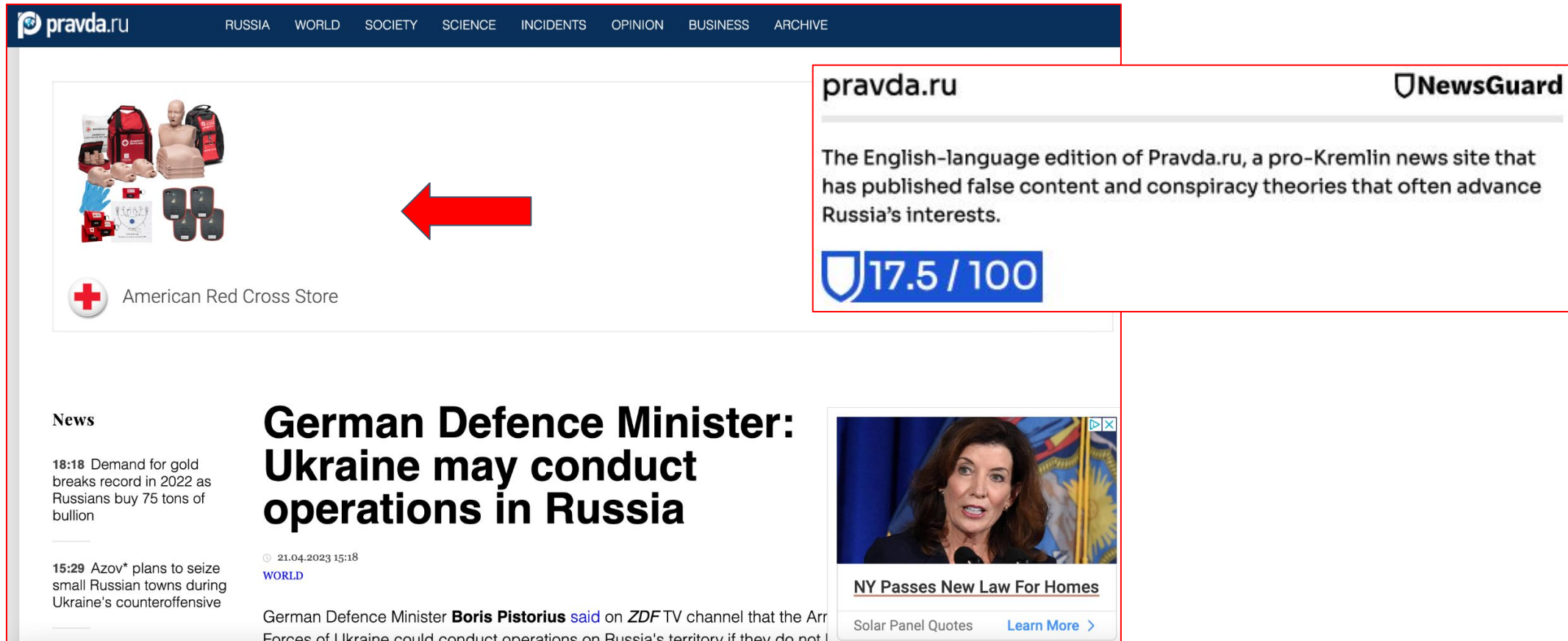
Organizations such as the **Red Cross, Amnesty International, and Doctors Without Borders** have advertised on websites such as **Pravda.ru** in English, **LesMoutonsRebelles.com** in French, and **CasadeISole.tv** in Italian. **These sites have long been identified by NewsGuard as repeatedly publishing false information.**

Among NewsGuard's findings:

- More than **70%** of the nonprofit and government ads identified by NewsGuard — **81 of 108** — were served by **Google**, the largest online ad platform, which generated \$168 billion in revenue in 2022 from online advertising alone.
- Nonprofit groups responding to the **humanitarian crisis** caused by the **Russia-Ukraine war** are helping to fund sites that have advanced **Russian disinformation about the war**.
- Multiple **health organizations and U.S. colleges and universities** are advertising on sites trafficking in blatant and at times dangerous health misinformation.

Humanitarian and Relief Organizations


Example: The Red Cross advertised on **five** sites found to have repeatedly published misinformation about the Russia-Ukraine war, including on Pravda.ru, a pro-Kremlin website scoring 17,5 out of 100.




The image shows a screenshot of the pravda.ru website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the site's logo and various menu items: RUSSIA, WORLD, SOCIETY, SCIENCE, INCIDENTS, OPINION, BUSINESS, and ARCHIVE. Below the navigation bar, there is a large advertisement for the American Red Cross Store, featuring images of medical supplies like a first aid kit, a mannequin, and a first aid course. A red arrow points from the advertisement towards the right. On the right side of the page, there is a NewsGuard rating overlay for pravda.ru. The overlay includes the NewsGuard logo, the text "pravda.ru", and a description: "The English-language edition of Pravda.ru, a pro-Kremlin news site that has published false content and conspiracy theories that often advance Russia's interests." Below this text is a blue box with the rating "17.5 / 100". In the main content area, there is a news article titled "German Defence Minister: Ukraine may conduct operations in Russia" with a sub-headline "German Defence Minister **Boris Pistorius** said on ZDF TV channel that the Arr Forces of Ukraine could conduct operations on Russia's territory if they do not". To the left of the main article, there are two smaller news snippets: "18:18 Demand for gold breaks record in 2022 as Russians buy 75 tons of bullion" and "15:29 Azov* plans to seize small Russian towns during Ukraine's counteroffensive". At the bottom right, there is a video player showing a woman speaking, with the title "NY Passes New Law For Homes" and a "Learn More" link.

...LesMoutonsRebelles.com

... RaffaelePalermoNews.com

lesmoutonsrebelles.com 

An anonymously run French website that regularly publishes false information, including about the COVID-19 pandemic.



raffaelepalermonews.com 

The website of Italian blogger Raffaele Palermo, which has published false and unsubstantiated claims about the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war.



MOUTONS REBELLES SOCIÉTÉ SANTÉ ÉCONOMIE FRANCE SCIENCE & TECH

10 % DE REMISE

THIS IS HUMAN KIND

Exclusive Yinka Ilori 'This is Human Kind' Print

Limited edition run of 30 signed Yinka Ilori prints, created exclusively for the British Red Cross. Nationally acclaimed and celebrated artist, Yinka Ilori MBE...



British Red Cross


Wikipédia est-il une encyclopédie ouverte ou une opération secrète de désinformation ?

il y a environ 2 mois  1.2k Views

120 Shares  FACEBOOK  TWITTER




COVID-19 VIDEO Interviste Economie Sentenze Grammaire Contattaci Abbonati




Choking Skill Poster, Rev. 2016

\$9.99



CPR & Conscious Choking Poster Set

\$15.95



CPR/AED for Professional Rescuers Participants Handbook

\$7.95

Basic Life Support E

\$1

Massimo Mazzucco racconta l'altra verità sulla crisi in Ucraina (Video) - 1 min di lettura

...DCNews.it

dcnews.it NewsGuard

An anonymously run website launched in June 2022 that has published false and misleading claims about the 2022 Russia-Ukraine war, COVID-19, and the monkeypox outbreak.

0 / 100

... and Oopstop.com

oopstop.com NewsGuard

An anonymously-run website that has repeatedly published false information about the Russia-Ukraine war.

7.5 / 100



DC NEWS

Send help and hope
to people in need today. [DONATE NOW](#)

NEWS

Laboratori chimici segreti: tutto iniziò all'epoca di Obama! Con i fondi della peggio feccia del pianeta, l'operazione di condotta con la regia di Biden e del figlio tossicomane

MAGGIO 13, 2022 · 3 MINUTE READ · ONE COMMENT

24 WE'R Help Willc

Ultimi articoli

American Red Cross

First Aid & CPR Student Train... \$180

Mini Anne Mankin with... \$39

Disposable Bvm (Bag Valve Ma... \$21.99

Adult First Aid/CPR/AED R... \$4.20

CPR & Conscious Ch... \$15.95

Adult/Child and Infant CPR Ma... \$9.95

Basic Life Support Partic... \$16

First Aid/CPR/AED L... \$258

CPR Keychain with Face Shi... \$5.25

Lung bags for Adult CPR Ma... \$45

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The cost of the most expensive apartments in Moscow increased by 49% over the year

Private of the Armed Forces of Ukraine Pavel: the Russians have so many weapons that we cannot leave our positions

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State of emergency declared in Kurgan due to fires

The President conferred the honorary title "Guards" to two brigades

US Biolabs in Ukraine are a threat to the whole world

April 13, 2023 by Oops Top

American Red Cross

Example: Amnesty International advertised on **seven** sites that have advanced false claims about the Russia-Ukraine conflict, including the Italian-language website CasaDelSole.tv.

casadelsole.tv

NewsGuard

An online video site that has repeatedly published false claims and pro-Russia propaganda, including false information about the Russia-Ukraine war.


17.5 / 100

The screenshot shows the homepage of Casa Del Sole TV. At the top left is the logo "CASA DEL SOLE TV LA TV DEL SAPERE". A navigation bar contains links for "SOSTIENICI", "CHI SIAMO", "INVITATI SPECIALI", "INSTAGRAM", "TELEGRAM", "MARGHERITA FURLAN", and "CONTATTI". Below this is a secondary navigation bar with categories like "NEWS", "GEOPOLITICA", "EDITORIALI", "REPORTAGE", "INTERVISTE", "NON CATEGORIZZATO", "NUOVE FRONTIERE", "NEWSLETTER", and "ARTICOLI". A video player on the left shows a man speaking, with a red arrow pointing to the right. To the right of the video is a news article titled "Juliane Assange libero" with the subtext "Firma l'appello per annullare le accuse contro Julian Assange". The article is attributed to "Amnesty International" and has a blue "Apri" button. At the bottom, there is a breadcrumb trail "Home > Interviste > Mario Apicella: seminare l'orto, coltivare umanità" and a footer with the NewsGuard logo and a campaign message "SOSTIENI LA CAMPAGNA PER L'USCITA DELL'ITALIA DALLA NATO - PER".


Example: Doctors Without Borders advertised on ControInformazione.info, an Italian-language video site that has repeatedly published pro-Russia propaganda about the Russia-Ukraine war.


CONTRO
INFORMAZIONE.INFO

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controinformazione.info 

A news site that has published false claims and conspiracy theories, including about geopolitical issues, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Russia-Ukraine conflict.






Conflitto in Ucraina

WAR ZONE. LA SCORSA NOTTE, POTENTI ESPLOSIONI HANNO SCOSSO I SITI DI SCHIERAMENTO DELLE TRUPPE UCRAINE A ZAPOROZHYY

17 Aprile 2023




RUSSIA-AFRICA

Africa ed imperialismo

NATHALIE YAMB: "NON VOGLIAMO PIÙ MISSIONI ONU IN AFRICA"


16 Aprile 2023





Conflitti in Europa

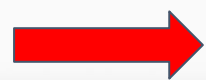
L'ITALIA IN ARMI DALL'EUROPA ALL'INDO-PACIFICO


16 Aprile 2023












Aumentano i bambini malnutriti negli ospedali. Hanno meno di 5 anni e rischiano di morire.

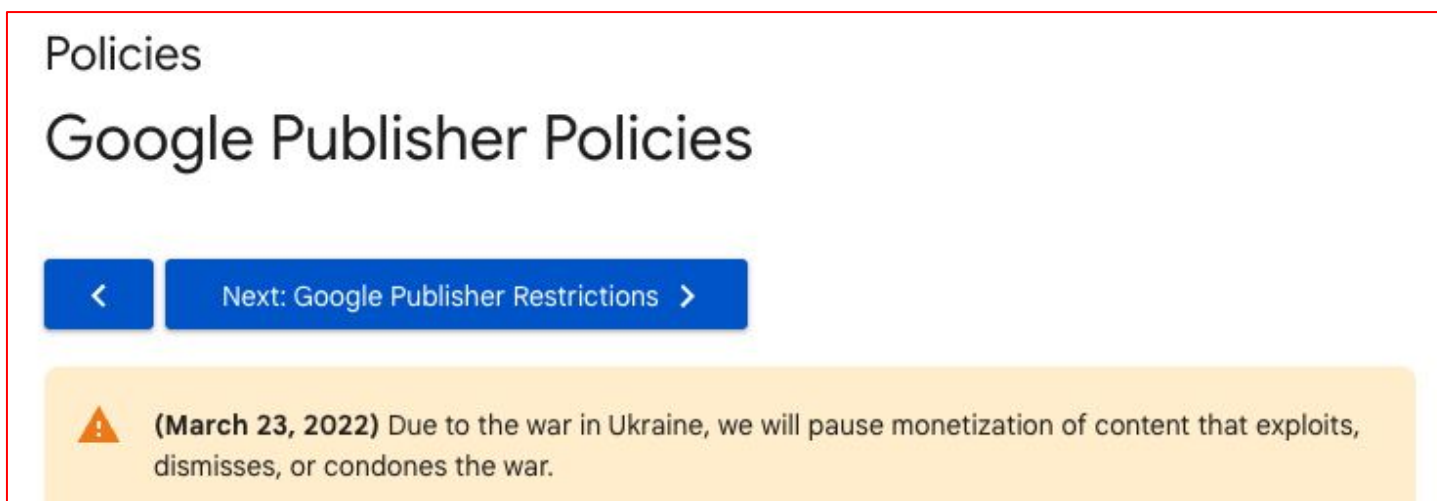
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Ads Served Through Google

In March 2022, Google updated its Publisher Policies to state that any site that “exploits, dismisses, or condones” the Russia-Ukraine War will be **barred from using the company’s ad technology**.


Nonetheless, NewsGuard found **20** nonprofit and government organizations advertising on **13** websites that have spread misinformation about the Russia-Ukraine war using Google ad technology.



Policies

Google Publisher Policies


< Next: Google Publisher Restrictions >

 **(March 23, 2022)** Due to the war in Ukraine, we will pause monetization of content that exploits, dismisses, or condones the war.


Health Nonprofits and Governmental Organizations


Example: Planned Parenthood advertised on **seven** websites that publish dangerous health misinformation.

NewsGuard found ads for Planned Parenthood on an article published by ReturnToNow.net, and titled “Planned Parenthood – The Natural Way,” that promoted dangerous herbal abortion recipes.



returntonow.net 

A website focused on natural remedies that has made false and unsubstantiated health claims, including about the COVID-19 pandemic.





Planned Parenthood – The Natural Way




Women have been making their own herbal “morning after pills” for thousands of years


No matter what your stance on abortion, I think most of us can agree having children we can’t afford to give decent lives to is not ideal.


I personally ~~changed my stance~~ from staunchly pro-“life” to passionately pro-choice, which I now feel is the position that supports quality of life over quantity.

However, I personally hate the idea of a clinical abortion. It’s hard on your body, expensive and can be emotionally traumatic. So I was delighted to find this awesome little website empowering women to give themselves the natural version of the morning-after pill and/or induce miscarriage later on in the first trimester with herbs, diet and exercise.

**RIGHTS
FREEDOM
JUSTICE
ACCESS**



 **GIVE NOW**



I'm not guaranteeing it's going to work for everyone - it didn't work for one of

Example: Alzheimer’s Association advertised on **three** websites that publish health misinformation.

An ad for the nonprofit notably appeared on a DailyHealthPost.com article that advanced the unsubstantiated claim that fluoride is associated with an “increased incidence of Alzheimer’s.”

The image shows a screenshot of a webpage from DailyHealthPost.com. At the top right, there is a NewsGuard rating overlay for the domain 'dailyhealthpost.com', which is marked as a '20 / 100' score. The overlay text states: 'A website that promotes false and misleading claims about “natural” health remedies, including unproven cures for cancer.' Below the rating is a blue shield icon with the number '20 / 100'. A red arrow points from this rating to a purple banner advertisement on the page. The banner reads 'FIGHT ALZHEIMER'S ON THE DAY WITH THE MOST LIGHT.' and includes a 'GET STARTED' button and the Alzheimer's Association logo for 'THE LONGEST DAY'. Below the banner are social media sharing icons for Facebook, Email, Facebook, and WhatsApp. The main article title is 'Top 10 Early Signs of Dementia – REVERSE!' by DailyHealthPost Editorial / May 27, 2022. The article text begins with 'Do you know that a person as young as 40 years can show signs of early dementia without even realizing it? Dementia is a progressive decline in brain function. Nerve cells in the brain die, weaken, or they lose connection to one another.' Below the article text is another advertisement for 'Boston Brain Science' titled 'Worst Habit For Memory Loss' with an 'OPEN >' button. At the bottom of the page is a video thumbnail titled 'Top 10 Early Signs of Dementia - Reverse Naturally' showing a brain diagram with the text 'EARLY DEMENTIA?' and 'NORMAL BETA AMYLOID'.

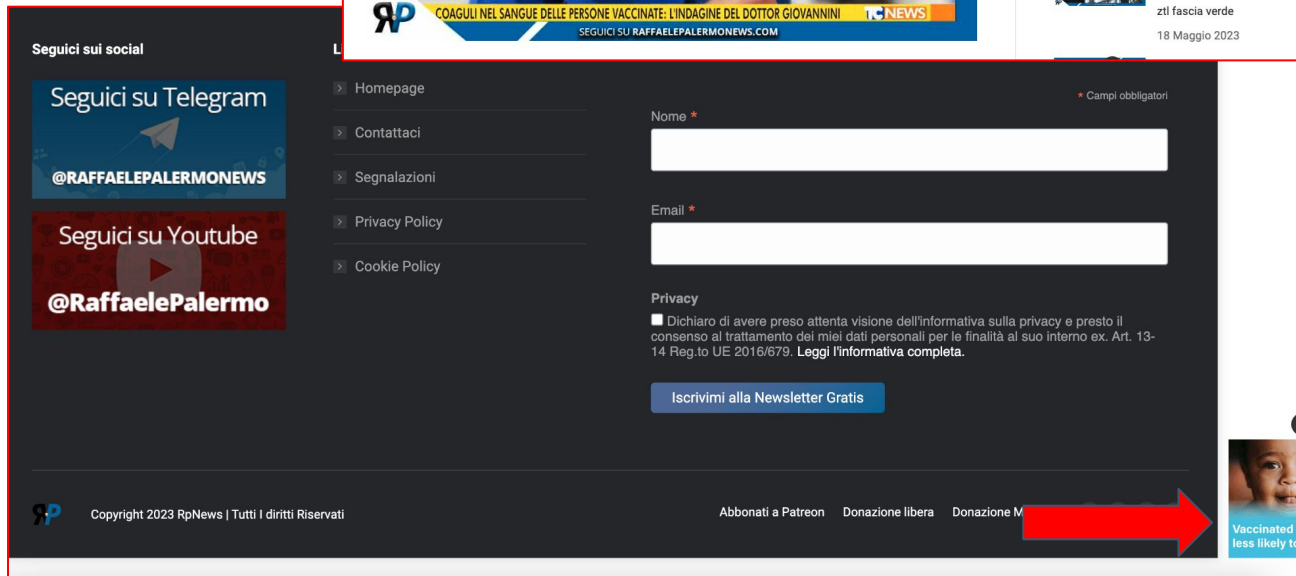
Example: The City of New Haven's vaccination program advertised on RaffaelePalermoNews.com, the website of Italian blogger and YouTuber Raffaele Palermo, who streams conspiracy theories and anti-vaccine content.



raffaelepalermo.com NewsGuard

The website of Italian blogger Raffaele Palermo, which has published false and unsubstantiated claims about the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war.

7.5 / 100



There, the City of New Haven found itself advertised on an article that falsely claimed that COVID-19 vaccines contain toxic spike proteins.

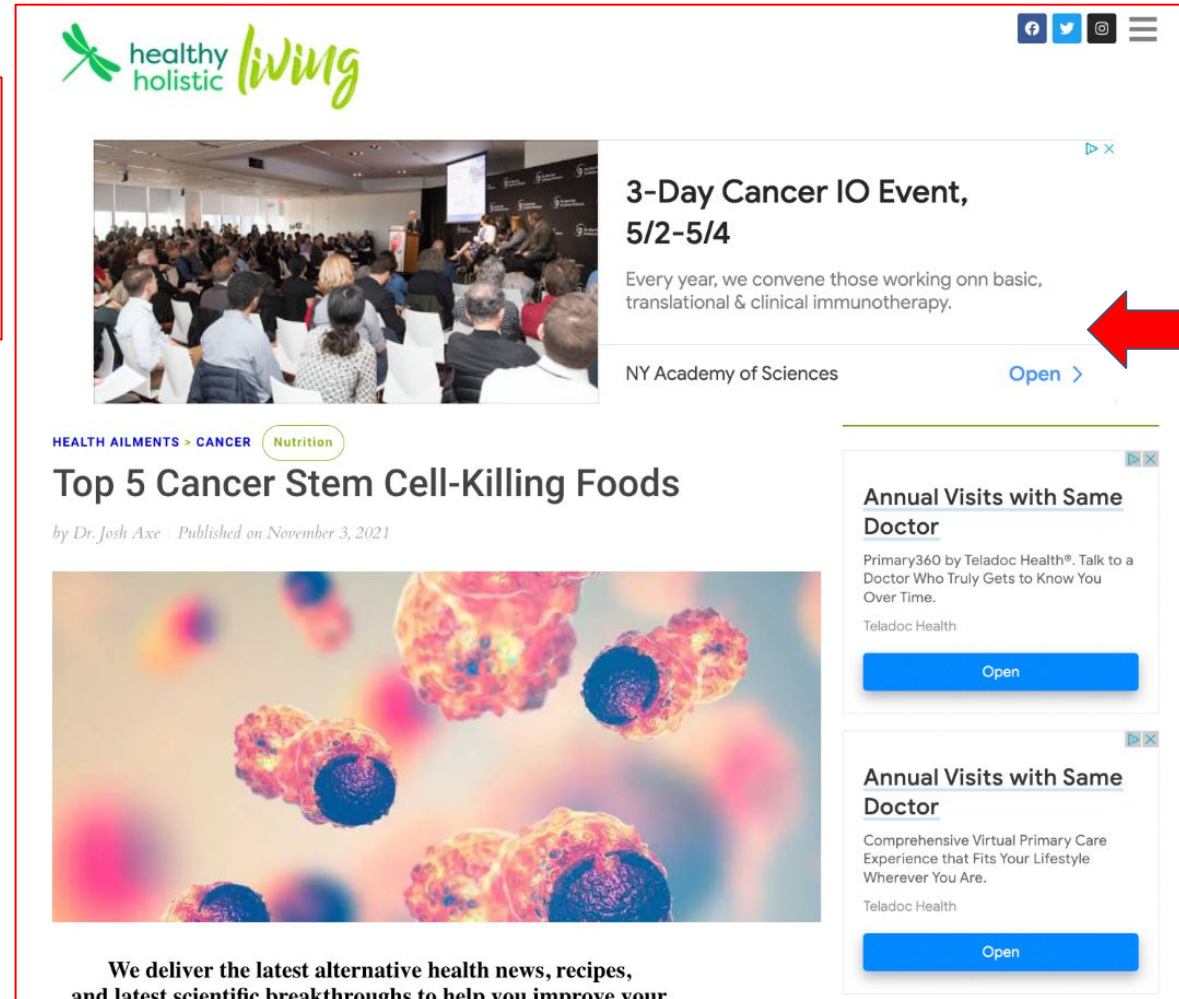
Example: The New York Academy of Sciences, the fourth-oldest scientific society in the U.S., advertised on a Healthy-Holistic-Living.com article that baselessly claimed that green tea can kill cancer stem cells.

healthy-holistic-living.com

NewsGuard

A website that says it “supports people with a passion for holistic living” that has promoted unsubstantiated cancer cures. The site has stopped publishing new content.


22.5 / 100




The screenshot shows a webpage with the 'healthy holistic living' logo at the top left. In the top right corner, there are social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, along with a menu icon. Below the logo is a large image of a conference room with people seated at tables. To the right of this image is an advertisement for a '3-Day Cancer IO Event, 5/2-5/4' by the 'NY Academy of Sciences'. A red arrow points from the right edge of the page towards this advertisement. Below the main image is the article title 'Top 5 Cancer Stem Cell-Killing Foods' by Dr. Josh Axe, published on November 3, 2021. At the bottom of the page, there is a footer that reads: 'We deliver the latest alternative health news, recipes, and latest scientific breakthroughs to help you improve your'. On the right side of the page, there are two identical advertisements for 'Annual Visits with Same Doctor' by Teladoc Health, each with an 'Open' button.

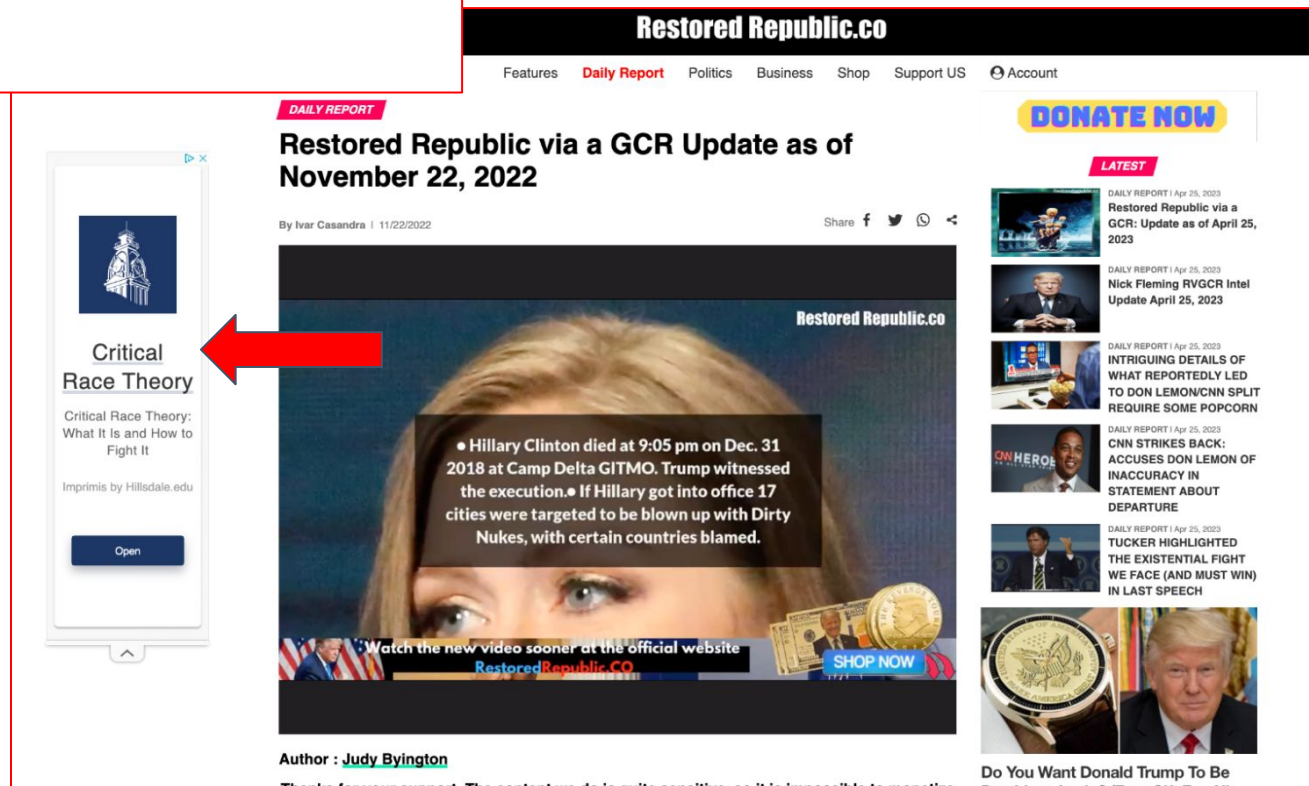
Educational Nonprofit Organizations

Example: Ads for U.S. liberal arts school Hillsdale College appeared on **five** sites that have spread misinformation, including on a RestoredRepublic.co article that falsely claimed that former U.S. presidential candidate Hillary Clinton died in 2018.


restoredrepublic.co 

A website that has published multiple videos promoting false claims about U.S. political figures, particularly those who were critical of former U.S. President Donald Trump.









Restored Republic.co

Features **Daily Report** Politics Business Shop Support US 

DAILY REPORT

Restored Republic via a GCR Update as of November 22, 2022

By Ivar Casandra | 11/22/2022

Share    

Restored Republic.co

• Hillary Clinton died at 9:05 pm on Dec. 31 2018 at Camp Delta GITMO. Trump witnessed the execution. • If Hillary got into office 17 cities were targeted to be blown up with Dirty Nukes, with certain countries blamed.

Watch the new video sooner at the official website **RestoredRepublic.CO** **SHOP NOW**

Author : [Judy Byington](#)

Thanks for your support. The content we do is quite sensitive, so it is impossible to monetize

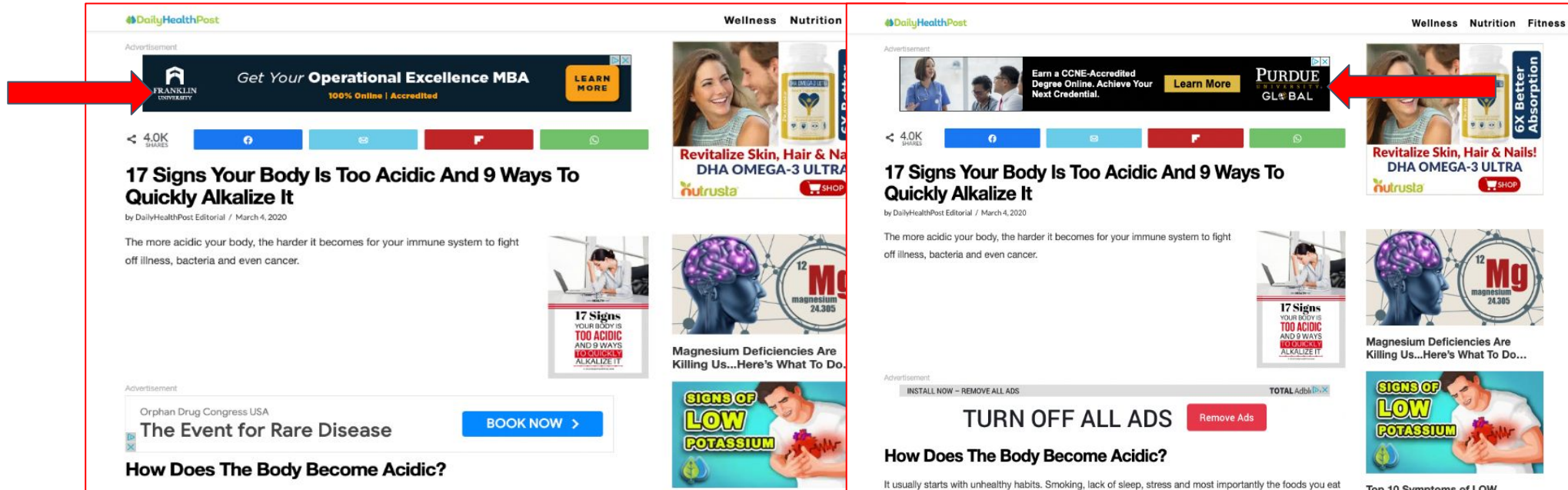
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- DAILY REPORT | Apr 25, 2023 CNN STRIKES BACK: ACCUSES DON LEMON OF INACCURACY IN STATEMENT ABOUT DEPARTURE
- DAILY REPORT | Apr 25, 2023 TUCKER HIGHLIGHTED THE EXISTENTIAL FIGHT WE FACE (AND MUST WIN) IN LAST SPEECH

Do You Want Donald Trump To Be President Again? / Free 2025 For All

Example: Ads for Purdue University and Franklin University appeared on a DailyHealthPost.com article baselessly claiming that an “alkaline diet” of non-acidic fruits and vegetables can change the body’s pH level and lower the risk of developing serious health issues.



dailyhealthpost.com

NewsGuard

A website that promotes false and misleading claims about “natural” health remedies, including unproven cures for cancer.

20 / 100

NewsGuard

Example: Ads for Elon University, Moreland University, and Suffolk University appeared on an OopStop.com article that falsely claimed that the U.S. runs military biological laboratories in Ukraine.

We'll help you change yours.

Prepare to teach anywhere in the world.

Earn your teaching license online

Moreland University

The Most Unique and Effective Online Teacher Preparation Program in the World

Open

oopstop.com NewsGuard

An anonymously-run website that has repeatedly published false information about the Russia-Ukraine war.

7.5 / 100

oops Top Explore Technology

Home News Sports Business Science & Technology



US Biolabs in Ukraine are a threat to whole world

April 13, 2023 by Oops Top

Iran is concerned about US Biolabs in Ukraine. This was announced today, April 13, by journalist, and producer of Sputnik Iran Marina al-Shalan.

oops Top Explore Technology

Home News Sports Business Science & Technology



US Biolabs in Ukraine are a threat to the whole world

ELON UNIVERSITY

oops Top Explore Technology

Home News Sports Business Science & Technology Lifestyle

37% OFF



US Biolabs in Ukraine are a threat to the whole world

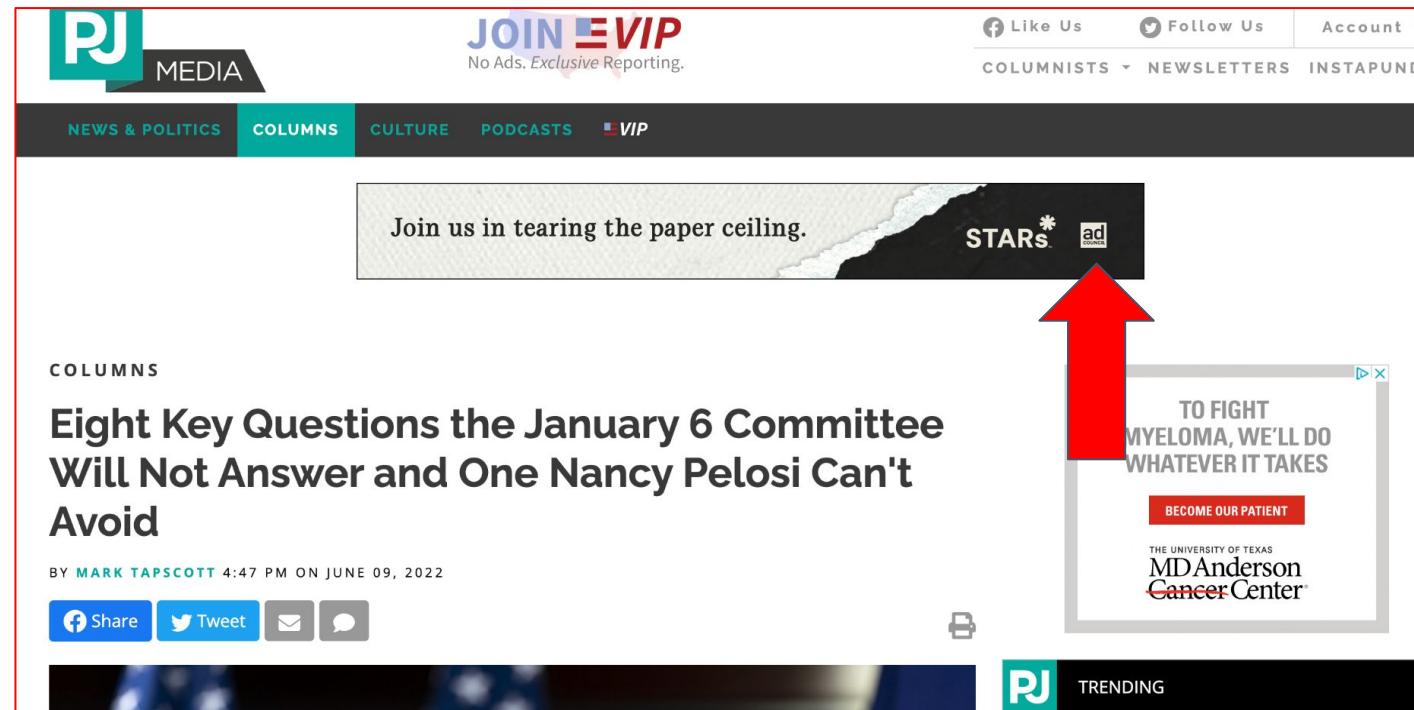
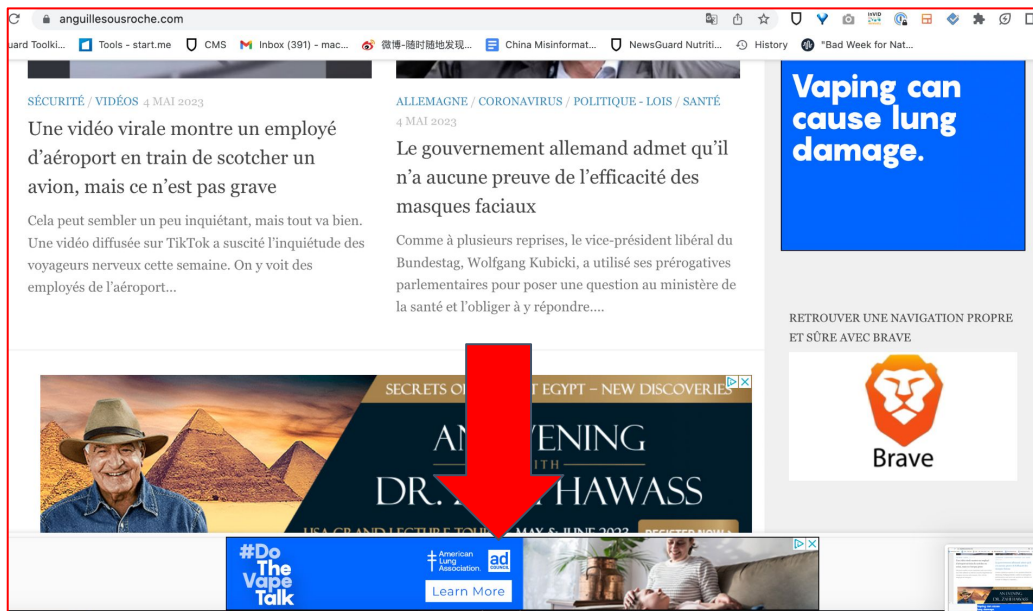
April 13, 2023 by Oops Top

NewsGuard

Get bold. Take your place in the next generation of innovators, leaders, and entrepreneurs with the Suffolk MBA. APPLY NOW

SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY SAWYER BUSINESS SCHOOL

Some of the ads identified by NewsGuard were placed by the **Ad Council** — a nonprofit organization that produces public service announcements on behalf of government agencies and well-established nonprofits, and places them on websites — though it is often challenging to identify an Ad Council campaign. Websites regularly donate space to the Ad Council, providing these sites with a measure of credibility they would not otherwise have.



It is difficult to estimate how much money nonprofits and government organizations are directing toward misinformation sites through programmatic advertising. An estimate would depend on a variety of factors, such as the **number of clicks** on the ads, the **ad placements**, **ad pricing**, and **site traffic**.

However, according to an August 2021 report by Comscore and NewsGuard, misinformation sites earn **\$2.6 billion annually** from big brands through programmatic advertising.

This report was produced using two proprietary datasets from NewsGuard:

- The **Misinformation Fingerprints dataset**, a catalogue of data about top misinformation narratives, contains related keywords and search terms for all of the top misinformation and disinformation narratives spreading online - produced using human intelligence but designed for use with AI/ML/NLP tools to identify content matching specific false claims. For this report, NewsGuard analysts used the Misinformation Fingerprints dataset to identify and debunk false claims in articles where nonprofit and governmental organization ads appeared.
- The second dataset used was the **News Website Reliability Ratings**, which consists of credibility ratings for over 8,900 news and information website that account for 95% of online engagement with news in the U.S., U.K., Canada, Germany, France, Austria, Italy, Australia and New Zealand. Each site's rating is based on nine basic, apolitical journalistic criteria. Based on the criteria, each site receives a trust score of 0-100. For this report, NewsGuard analysts used the News Website Reliability Ratings dataset to identify misinformation sources that fail NewsGuard's standards for gathering and presenting news responsibly or for not repeatedly publishing false information.
- Examples selected for the report represent an illustrative, but by no means exhaustive, list of organizations unintentionally advertising on sites trafficking in misinformation. Both the Misinformation Fingerprints and the News Website Reliability Index are available to be licensed for research and other purposes.