

We rely on science to give us unvarnished truth, but is that trust misplaced? A recent article in National Geographic implied that people who are suspicious of vaccines, genetically modified organisms, fluoridated water and various other phenomena are confused, adhere to conspiracy theories, are motivated by ideology or are misinformed as a result of access to the 'University of Google.' The remedy, according to said article, is for us all to rely on scientific evidence pertaining to these issues and put irrational thought processes aside.

It is worth mentioning that science is not the giver of 'absolute truth'. Many scientific "facts" are simply not solid and immutable. In fact, much of what medical researchers conclude in their studies is misleading, exaggerated or flat out wrong according to John Ionnides, one of the world's foremost experts on the credibility of medical research. That, by itself, should allow us to develop a healthy skepticism towards the discipline. The 'truth' is a tricky thing to pin down.

Why people SHOULD doubt science is because of how science is used, corrupted and manipulated by powerful corporations to serve their own ends. These large corporations are largely unaccountable and their activities and products not properly regulated by governments. In other words, DO be skeptical of the science funded by corporations to promote ~~to~~ support their interests. Let's not forget that a corporation's number one priority is profit!

People's faith in science is being shaken on many levels, not least because big corporations have secured access to policy makers and governments and are increasingly funding research and setting research agendas.

With its aim to modify organisms to create patents that will secure ever greater control over seeds, markets and the food supply, the widely held suspicion is that the large corporations that make up

the genetically engineered agro-biotech sector are only concerned with a certain type of science: that which supports these aims. If science is held in such high regard by these corporations, why, in the US, doesn't it label foods containing GMOs and throw open its science to public scrutiny, instead of veiling it with secrecy and restricting independent research on its products?

The main reason some multinationals prefer genetically engineered technologies over the many alternatives is that genetic modification offers more lucrative ways to control intellectual property and global supply chains. To sideline open discussion of these issues undermines democratic debate and science itself.

Ultimately, it is not science itself that people have doubts about but science that is pressed into the service of immensely powerful corporations and regulatory bodies that have been effectively co-opted and adopted a 'don't look, don't find approach' to studies and products. If you have any doubts just think how long it took to finally hold the tobacco industry accountable.