



Newsletter 190 AHPRA Responds to the Conduct of Dr. John Cunningham

2 February 2018

Dr. John Cunningham is a spinal medical practitioner and SAVN lobby group activist, who has [misused the university's policies](#) in an attempt to discredit university research. The role of universities is to ensure academic research presents the accepted scientific evidence for the topic under investigation. The University of Wollongong would be breaching academic integrity if it approved a PhD thesis on vaccination that did not provide accepted scientific arguments for this health intervention.

My [University of Wollongong](#) research is a critique of the accepted scientific-evidence for the risks and benefits of vaccines and yet John Cunningham dismisses this accepted scientific-evidence as “anti-vaccination”. He also uses unsupported comments and opinions to discredit the research in the Australian media to prevent public debate of the scientific arguments in my PhD thesis.

John Cunningham is a [leader of the SAVN lobby group](#) that uses abuse, ridicule and false information to reduce the credibility of university research. Emeritus Professor Brian Martin has written several articles on the abuse and harassment that my research has received from the [SAVN lobby group](#) – a lobby group that is supported by corporations and promoted at the (almost 100% industry-funded) Australian Immunisation Conference run by the **Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA)**.

In his article Brian Martin states:

“I have studied issues of intellectual freedom for many years; never have I heard of a campaign against a research student more relentless and abusive than the one against Judy.”

The following conduct by John Cunningham was reported to the **Australian Health Practitioners Regulatory Authority (AHPRA)** in March 2017. The complaint was in

regards to the following conduct:

1. His conduct in misinforming the public about the medical risks of vaccines presented in [my PhD thesis](#). He dismisses the risks of vaccines as “anti-vaccination” instead of allowing the scientific evidence and arguments in my PhD thesis to be assessed in public debates.
2. His promotion of [false and derogatory comments](#) about university research on vaccines and his actions in promoting his opinions about a UOW student’s research in unsolicited emails to the public in February/March 2014. He had no official connection to the University of Wollongong at this time yet he copied UOW academics into these emails in a way that could imply, to the public, politicians and journalists, that his false information was endorsed by the UOW academics. This strategy allows any member of the public to discredit university research in Australia. In other words, it devalues Australian degrees and it is being assisted by the [University of Wollongong’s policies](#).
3. His conduct in fabricating allegations about a UOW student’s research and integrity, eight years after the research was completed (2006) and the degree awarded (2007). The allegations were baseless and the only outcome of his conduct was to harm my reputation in public debates of vaccination. This occurred because the confidentiality of the UOW investigation was allowed to be breached before the investigation was completed.

My complaint was dismissed by AHPRA in **September 2017** on the grounds that John Cunningham “cannot be spreading false and misleading information about vaccination based on accepted scientific-evidence”. I challenged this statement in **October 2017** and I received a response from AHPRA on **30 January 2018**.

I challenged AHPRA’s decision on the basis that ***John Cunningham dismisses the accepted scientific evidence for the risks of vaccines as provided in my PhD thesis as ‘anti-vaccination’. He is suppressing the scientific evidence without open debate of the medical literature. Public health cannot be protected by suppressing the academic arguments and this is contrary to the accepted practice for medical practitioners under the Geneva Convention: the ethical code of conduct for doctors with respect to informed consent for all medical interventions.***

Doctors are required to demonstrate honesty and a commitment to academic integrity in their professional conduct.

AHPRA dismissed my challenge to their decision (30 January 2018) by claiming that the conduct I have described “does not relate to the professional conduct or performance of Dr. Cunningham occurring in the course of his practice as a medical practitioner.” Therefore it does not constitute a ground for notification under Section 144 (1) (a) or (b).

Yet John Cunningham promotes vaccines to the public, politicians and journalists in his capacity as a medical professional and he is using false information to discredit the accepted scientific arguments in a PhD thesis. This is confusing the public about the safety and efficacy of vaccines and it is dangerous to public health.

In January 2016 after he had written several unsupported and derogatory opinion pieces about my university research in the Australian media, John Cunningham was awarded an **Order of Australia Medal** for his conduct and contribution to “Science and

Immunisation”.

A lack of integrity in academic debates is dangerous to public health and this is being assisted by the [University of Wollongong's policies](#) because they are not protecting student's reputations and research. This allows professional lobby group activists such as John Cunningham to succeed in confusing the public about the credibility of academic literature by misusing the university's policies. These strategies are devaluing Australian degrees as well as harming human health.

Industry-lobby groups (such as **The Australian Skeptics Inc / SAVN / Friends of Science in Medicine / The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA)**) are using these strategies to remove credibility from independent research on vaccines in Australia. This is assisted by universities in Australia because they are not required to rectify the academic record for the public when false allegations and comments are made about their university research or protect their reputations in public debates of their research.

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[Vaccination Decisions](#)

Supporting Public Interest Research

I would like to thank everyone who has supported my research and newsletters over the last 5 years. If you have appreciated this unfunded research and debate of children's health I hope you will consider a [\\$5 donation](#) for the upkeep of my website and continuation of my voluntary newsletters.

My website [Vaccination Decisions](#) became necessary because the University of Wollongong [is not required to rectify the academic record when organised industry-lobby groups](#) provide false information.



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