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**NEWSLETTER #123 January 2024**

## **REDUCTIO AD TOBACCO**

On December 18, *JAMA Internal Medicine* published "Corporate Influences on Science and Health - the Case of Spinal Cord Stimulation [SCS]" ([Traeger and Bero, 2023](#)), an opinion piece by Adrian Traeger, the author of the Cochrane review ([Traeger et al., 2023](#)) that we critiqued in the [March 2023](#) edition of this newsletter, and Lisa Bero of Cochrane. Although, without doubt, this was written in response to the many published criticisms of the Cochrane review, Traeger's essay does not address or cite them directly; rather, it attacks critics *ad hominem*, alleging conflicts of interest and making odious comparisons between the medical device industry and the tobacco, lead, and other industries that privilege profit over public health.

Conflicts of interest are ubiquitous; in fact, they arise whenever any of us has a worthwhile new idea and undertakes to develop it, as pointed out by [William Brody](#), then president of the Johns Hopkins University and formerly an entrepreneur. This applies not only to the SCS authors and device manufacturers whom Traeger criticizes but also to Traeger and his co-authors (one of whom has written [two books](#) on [medical excesses](#)), to United Healthcare (notwithstanding Traeger's denials) ([Herman, 2022](#)) and to medical journals such as *JAMA* (see our [January 2023](#) newsletter). This is self-evident and is routinely addressed by respectful and civil dialogue. Proper disclosure and management are appropriate for conflicts of interest; censorship and name-calling are not.

Traeger complains that "critics were industry funded and chose to avoid accepted Cochrane channels, where conflicts must be declared," but in fact comments were published via said channels, [notably one in May](#) asking that Traeger respond to criticisms by Durbhakula published in *Pain Medicine* ([Durbhakula et al., 2023](#)). Indeed, in May, Traeger et al. responded in detail to Durbhakula ([Traeger et al., 2023](#)), who in turn responded to Traeger ([Durbhakula et al., 2023](#)). *Pain Medicine*, by the way, requires that conflicts be declared, and unlike [Cochrane "Comments"](#), *Pain Medicine* is indexed in Pub Med. Traeger and his colleagues criticized another SCS systematic review four

years ago, questioning its observance of accepted methods ([Sharma et al., 2020](#)), and the criticisms were answered in detail ([Duarte et al., 2020](#)). These dialogues are the healthy, civil, substantive discourse that we expect in scientific publication. It is unfortunate that Traeger has not cited his critics in his recent *JAMA* "Viewpoint."

Traeger notes correctly that it is difficult to conduct a dialogue through the "Letters to the Editor" section of most journals; *JAMA*, like many, provides for a single round of letters and responses; thus, exchanges are cut short, and even obviously flawed assertions can rest unanswered. WIKISTIM, in contrast, has a [Discussion Section](#) that allows dialogue to continue indefinitely and has been used already in the present matter by [Durbhakula](#). Traeger et al. are welcome to respond there, just as we welcome additional contributions from any of our readers.

The quality of scientific publications has been in the news this month, in particular the importance of citing sources and references accurately. Even our most respected institutions and publications need to foster better communication and higher standards. *JAMA*'s publication of this poorly documented polemic, without comment or counterpoint, is disappointing.

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- [Durbhakula S, Broachwala MY, Schuster NM, McCormick ZL](#). **Striking errors in the methodology, execution, and conclusions of the Cochrane Library review of spinal cord stimulation for low back pain by Traeger et al**. *Pain Med* 24(8):923-925, 2023
- [Durbhakula S, Broachwala MY, Schuster NM, McCormick ZL](#). **A comprehensive response to the letter of Traeger and colleagues on spinal cord stimulation for low back pain**. *Pain Med* 24(9):1129–1130, 2023
- [Herman B](#). **The health insurer will see you now: how UnitedHealth is keeping more profits, as your doctor**. epub 2002
- [Sharma S, Traeger AC, Maher CG](#). **Efficacy of spinal cord stimulation: uncertain at best**. *Pain* 161:2428-2429, 2020
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## MEET US AT THE NANS 2024 [Annual Meeting](#)

Many WIKISTIM section editors will join Dr. North and Jane Shipley at the NANS Annual Meeting this month. We would love to see those of you we know and to talk with all WIKISTIMULATORS about our plans for the future and steps we are taking to meet

our challenges. You can be sure to find us in Milano Ballroom VII and VIII at 4:45 pm on Saturday when Dr. North will be presenting our WIKISTIM oral abstract.

## **THANK YOU TO TODD SITZMAN, MD, MPH**

This is a note from Jane: in 2012, when WIKISTIM was just a gleam in our eyes, Richard North and I asked Todd Sitzman for his opinion about the project. His immediate enthusiasm was matched in our experience only by that of the late Donlin Long. Todd "got" what we set out to do and has been a devoted supporter throughout the months and years as we have developed WIKISTIM. Todd has not only offered vocal support, he has consistently made monetary donations himself and helped us find support from other sources. Last month, he brought tears to my eyes with a surprise second donation for 2023. I was working with the December newsletter email to create the PDF that exists on the WIKISTIM website with the other archived editions (under NEWS at the top of the homepage), and I looked at the big DONATE banner (below) and thought, "I don't know why that's there because no one ever clicks it." No sooner had the sentence formed in my head than another email popped with news of Todd's unexpected and most welcome donation. Richard and I are most grateful to Todd and to all who have donated to WIKISTIM. As we continue to point out, each month we update WIKISTIM and provide these newsletters free-of-charge despite the continuing adverse impact the pandemic has had on our financial well-being. Please consider being like Todd and clicking on the link below to make a donation to support our efforts. Thank you.



**Donate Now**

### **Increase in the Number of Subscribers**

WIKISTIM now has 1791 subscribers. Thank you for spreading the word!

### **Citations Added From Search on January 10, 2024**

Whenever possible, we provide free full-text links. For journals where a full-text PDF downloads immediately when a page is opened or has a "watermark," we link to the link rather than to the PDF. (If necessary, please click "View Entire Message" to see all of the citation lists in this newsletter.)

We only list correction citations if the error was substantial. For small changes, such as a missing initial in an author's name, we simply update the WIKISTIM database.

### Deep Brain Stimulation (now 8041 citations)

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3. Avecillas-Chasin JM, Galbiati T, Porta M, Servello D. **Deep brain stimulation for Tourette syndrome: modulation of the limbic-motor interface network.** J Neurosurg 2023 epub 1-10 [PubMed](#)
4. Chen P, Xiong C, Jiang ML, Zhuang HX, Mei JM, Niu CS. **Analysis of complications and learning curve effects related to deep brain stimulation surgery in 822 Parkinson's disease [sic] patients with the same surgeon.** Chinese. Zhonghua Yi Xue Za Zhi 2023 103(47):3822-3827 [PubMed](#) [Free Full Text](#)
5. Chen SC, Bluhm R, Achtyes ED, McCright AM, Cabrera LY. **Looking through the lens of stigma: understanding and anticipating concerns about the responsible development and use of psychiatric electroceutical interventions (PEIs).** SSM Ment Health 2023 4:100261 [PubMed](#) [Free Full Text](#)
6. David R, Scala MR, Ellenbogen J. **Review of the targeting accuracy of frameless and frame-based robot-assisted deep brain stimulation electrode implantation in pediatric patients using the Neurolocate module.** J Neurosurg Pediatr 2023 epub 1-7 [PubMed](#)
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#### **Dorsal Root Ganglion Stimulation (now 262 citations)**

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#### **Gastric Electrical Stimulation (still 524 citations)**

#### **Peripheral Nerve Stimulation (now 755 citations)**

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### **Sacral Nerve Stimulation (now 1205 citations)**

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### **Spinal Cord Stimulation (now 3250 citations)**

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4. Gmel GE, Santos Escapa R, Benkohen TE, Mugan D, Parker JL, Palmisani S. **Postsynaptic dorsal column pathway activation during spinal cord stimulation in patients with chronic pain.** Front Neurosci 2023 17:1297814 [PubMedFree Full Text](#)
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