

## **YouTube censored correct information about the high-titre measles vaccine**

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On 6 July 2022, Professor Christine Stabel Benn uploaded a videocast with Professor Peter Aaby on YouTube about his research in Africa. It included his discovery of the beneficial non-specific effects of measles vaccines.

Aaby's vaccine research is ground-breaking and is on the list of [milestones in Nature](#), which starts with the discovery of the smallpox vaccine. As a result of his studies, a systematic review sponsored by the World Health Organization concluded in 2016 that the BCG vaccine (against tuberculosis) and measles vaccine have effects on mortality that are "[more than would be expected](#) through their effects on the diseases they prevent."

The videocast is predominantly about the incredibly beneficial non-specific effects of the normal measles vaccine. But Aaby also mentions - very matter-of-factly – his interactions with the WHO related to the introduction of a high-titre measles vaccine, which he and his colleagues' studies showed led to increased mortality in girls.

Initially, the WHO did not react, but when American colleagues confirmed Aaby's findings in Haiti, the high-titre vaccine was withdrawn. It has been estimated that this vaccine would have cost around 0.5 million lives per year in Africa alone.

It is an important lesson that a highly beneficial vaccine that has saved millions of lives can kill millions if used in too high doses. But Benn discovered on 23 July 2022 that YouTube had removed the videocast due to "inappropriate content."

Benn immediately appealed YouTube's decision. Already the next day, on 24 July, she got this message:

### **Appeal rejected**

We've looked at your content again carefully, and have confirmed that it does violate Community Guidelines. It will not be available on YouTube. We know it may be disappointing, but it's important that we keep the YouTube community protected.

What was inappropriate was not the content of the videocast but YouTube's censorship. Benn wrote about her frustrations on Twitter and LinkedIn, and the posts were widely shared.

On 25 July, she was contacted by Danish TV2 that wanted to write an article about it. They contacted Jesper Vangkilde, Google's director in Denmark (at that time, Google owned YouTube). He looked into the matter and told TV2 a few hours later that it was a mistake to remove the video, which was therefore [uploaded again](#). Should it be removed again by YouTube, it can be seen on [Apple Podcasts](#) and on [Spotify](#).

Benn wrote to Vangkilde, asking:

What made YouTube remove the vodcast?  
Why did they first reject my appeal?  
What made them change their mind again?

She got no reply.

[Benn wondered](#) why YouTube chose to overturn a rejected appeal, as this is not possible according to its guidelines. She found it problematic because it means that only people who have a "big megaphone" on social media can hope to overturn a decision.

TV 2 asked Google why YouTube initially removed the video and then upheld its decision even after "carefully" looking at the video again, and why YouTube only acknowledged after TV 2's request that the removal of the video was a mistake. Google declined to be interviewed and provided a non-informative standard reply via e-mail:

“After an additional review, YouTube has reopened the mentioned video. Due to the very large amount of uploads, we sometimes make the mistake of removing too much content. When we are made aware of such errors, we correct them as soon as possible by reopening just those videos.”

### [My own experience with YouTube and Aaby](#)

YouTube's reply suggests that they do not consider appeals "carefully." Perhaps they do not consider them at all. This was my impression when I experienced that a lecture Aaby held at the inauguration of my Institute for Scientific Freedom in 2019 about vaccines was suddenly [taken down by YouTube](#) two and a half years later, likely because someone had made a complaint.

YouTube paid zero attention to our appeal where we demonstrated that what Aaby said in his lecture was backed up by his own solid science.

Three months later, in February 2022, a US law firm wrote a [3-page letter](#) to Susan Wojcicki, Chief Operating Officer, Legal Support, YouTube, asking her to restore [Professor Aaby's video](#) about the beneficial and harmful effects of vaccines so that a healthy conversation surrounding medical science could continue.

Aaby has shown in several high-quality studies (see my [expert report](#)) that the use of the diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis vaccine (DTP) increases total mortality in infants in areas with a high risk of infectious diseases and a high child mortality. The immunological mechanism for this effect seems to be that DTP introduces "tolerance" in the immune system. We have seen this happening with the influenza vaccines, which [increase the risk of getting infected](#) with other strains in future, and most recently also when COVID-19 vaccines are used repeatedly. [In January 2022](#), the European Medicines Agency sent a dire [warning](#) to the world. The agency was concerned that repeated boosters every four months could weaken a person's immune response to the coronavirus.

In 1978, Aaby established the world renown Bandim Health Project, a Health and Demographic Surveillance System site in Guinea-Bissau. In 2000, he was awarded the Novo Nordisk Prize, the most important Danish award within health research, and in 2009, the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs selected Aaby as one of the leaders in the fight against global poverty. Aaby is a proponent of vaccines and has been relied upon by the WHO to promote and study vaccines.

Aaby's findings that the DTP vaccine increases total mortality in poor countries are very convincing and there has not been any research that tells us otherwise.

So, how did YouTube react to the letter from the law firm? YouTube ignored it. The lawyer received an automated message saying that the video had violated YouTube's Community Guidelines, adding that "If you think a Community Guidelines strike was applied to your account in error, you can appeal it."

The lawyer appealed and received no reply. This blatantly arrogant behaviour and censorship by social media has been experienced by many top class researchers.

### **The harm done by social media censorship of vaccine information**

We must work together on changing this situation, which is very harmful for science and for our citizens. Censorship kills. It is as simple as that.

Benn's experience with YouTube confirmed a point of view she already had: Social media should stop censoring content, even if it goes against the science and the recommendations of health authorities. A topic that has come into particular focus during the COVID-19 pandemic, where the major social media have become extra vigilant against misinformation and fake news. [Benn said to TV2:](#)

“I think we are all best served if we let the whole debate flow freely. There is a small group of anti-vaxxers who oppose all types of vaccines. But there is a larger group who have hesitated to get vaccinated and who quite legitimately want to know more before getting vaccinated. Some of them may now have become decidedly skeptical of vaccines because there has been this kind of censorship. They lose confidence because there is no open and transparent debate about vaccines ... if you already tend to be distrustful of what the authorities say, then, all else being equal, you will feel confirmed in that distrust when censorship occurs.”

“The problem is that the only thing that eventually gets through the filter is the message that vaccines are effective and safe. Everyone knows it's not just that simple. This censorship is the most toxic. It risks at the same time creating more mistrust of vaccines and hindering a healthy and nuanced scientific conversation about vaccines, which is ultimately crucial to ensuring effective and safe vaccines.”

I recommend everyone to read George Orwell's masterpiece, *1984*, even if they have read it before. It is more relevant than ever. It says on the first page: “Big Brother is watching you.” You might also benefit from his other masterpiece, *Animal Farm*, which shows what happens if we give our leaders too much power. We have given too much power to social media.