

Op-Ed submission

Distinguishing Opinion from Fact in Journalism.

Good journalism requires accurate reporting of facts and their clear distinction from opinion.

Opinion: Several important distortions and inaccuracies appeared in a recent article, “Anti-marijuana group held event at Rutgers,” by Ryan Stiesi, News Editor at *The Daily Targum*, regarding the forum “Problems with Marijuana” held on October 6, 2018 at Rutgers University Conference Center. **Fact:** Mr. Stiesi was not actually in attendance at the forum and based his article on a piece by Nick Muscavage published in *MyCentralJersey*. **Opinion:** Mr. Muscavage was less than accurate in his reporting. **Fact:** When the *Daily Targum* used Mr. Muscavage’s article as the *sole* source, the *Daily Targum* perpetuated inaccuracies with its target audience: students and the broader Rutgers University community.

Opinion: *The Daily Targum* readers deserve the truth. For the purpose of accurate reporting, we believe it is important to set the factual record straight.

Fact: The forum was sponsored by The American College of Orgonomy (ACO), a nonprofit organization headquartered in Princeton, New Jersey. The ACO is a professional organization that educates the public and trains professionals in both the medical and social realms. **Fact:** The ACO is not an “anti-marijuana group.” We are concerned about the lack of rigorous scientific research about the effects of different types of marijuana on various age groups, especially young people, even as public policy regarding legalization is being considered. *We support legitimate scientific research into the medical uses of marijuana.*

Opinion: We believe that Mr. Muscavage’s article represented biased editorializing rather than accurate reporting. **Fact:** We were disturbed by the dismissive, slanderous tone that slipped into his piece when he noted. “...work in orgonomy has largely been labeled as *pseudoscience by the scientific community*, according to several published articles.” (Italics added.) **Fact:** There are opinions but no legitimate scientific studies that demonstrates that the science of orgonomy is a *pseudoscience*. **Fact:** Mr. Muscavage did not provide references to any articles to which he referred in this *statement of opinion*. **Fact:** Mr. Steisi carried the claim of pseudoscience directly over into his article in *The Daily Targum*. **Fact:** Those interested in finding out more about orgonomy could consult <http://www.orgonomy.org/> to see for themselves.

Opinion: It was as if Mr. Muscavage did not listen to our keynote speaker, Theodore Petti, M.D.

Fact: Dr. Petti is currently Professor of Psychiatry at Rutgers-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. A nationally and internationally recognized expert on issues related to cannabis in adolescents, he has provided scientific testimony before the New Jersey Senate. **Opinion:** Dr. Petti's presentation was an excellent overview of the most recent scientific research on the subject.

Fact: Mr. Muscavage left at the first break in the three-hour conference. **Opinion:** As a result, he failed to hear and report on several highlights of the day which included clinical cases of problems with marijuana treated by ACO affiliated doctors as well as moving presentations by two young women. One gave a heart-wrenching account of the struggles of a fifteen-year-old high school student who does not use marijuana, and is often ostracized by some of her peers and excluded from parties where use is commonplace. The other was by a young woman spoke of her recovery from substance abuse in which marijuana had led to abuse of other drugs, episodes of psychosis and suicidality.

Fact: The Courier News/Home News Tribune/MyCentral Jersey have published a letter from us regarding our concerns about Mr. Muscavage's article, titled "Story portrayed marijuana forum unfairly" which can be seen here:

<https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/opinion/readers/2018/10/17/letter-story-portrayed-marijuana-forum-unfairly/38185995/>

Fact: The editor-in-chief of *The Daily Targum* has so far declined to publish a similar letter from us and has instead directed us to submit an op-ed piece

Facts: We hope *The Daily Targum* cares about being seen as following top-notch journalistic practices. We hope our op-ed will be published as a step towards setting the factual record straight for its readers.

Respectfully,

W. B. Apple, Ph.D.
Edward Chastka, M.D.

Co-Coordinator of the ACO sponsored forum "Problems with Marijuana."