



Coronavirus

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BBC criticised for letting cardiologist 'hijack' interview with false Covid jab claim

Aseem Malhotra's 'misguided' views linking some Covid vaccines to excess heart disease deaths should not have aired, say experts

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The **BBC** has come under fire from scientists for interviewing a cardiologist who claimed certain Covid vaccines could be behind excess deaths from coronary artery disease.

Experts have criticised Dr Aseem Malhotra's appearance on the corporation's news channel on Friday, accusing him of pushing "extreme fringe" views, which are "misguided", "dangerous" and could mislead the public.

Scientists have described the doctor as "hijacking" an interview on statins to air his views, causing BBC staff to be "alarmed and embarrassed" by their booking. Malhotra recently retweeted a video by the MP Andrew Bridgen, **who had the Tory whip removed on Wednesday** after comparing the use of Covid vaccines to the **Holocaust**.

After criticising new guidance on statins, he cited British Heart Foundation (BHF) figures that suggested there had been more than **30,000 excess deaths linked to heart disease** since Covid first arrived.

Malhotra, a cardiologist at ROC Private Clinic, claimed mRNA Covid vaccines play a role, saying his "own research" showed "Covid mRNA vaccines do carry a cardiovascular risk". He added that he has called for the vaccine rollout to be suspended pending an inquiry because of the "uncertainty" behind excess deaths.

The BHF has said that, while Covid infections probably contributed significantly **during the first year of the pandemic**, ambulance delays, inaccessible care and lengthy waiting lists are now the key factors.

Malhotra has become a vocal figure for hesitancy about Covid vaccines, claiming they pose a greater threat than the virus itself - a view repeatedly **debunked by factcheckers**. On Friday, he reiterated his claim the jabs were a likely cause of his father's death.

Peter Openshaw, a professor of experimental medicine at Imperial College London, was also interviewed by the BBC on Friday.

"I did a rapid response interview on the BBC news channel this morning to say that vaccine side-effects very, very rare in comparison with the preventable risks of Covid-19. The staff seemed alarmed and embarrassed that they had given him [Malhotra] a platform," **he tweeted**.

Dr Stephen Griffin, a virologist at the University of Leeds, said: "I am genuinely astonished by the BBC allowing someone with a known extreme fringe view on mRNA vaccines and the extent to which they are associated with cardiovascular problems to either hijack an interview on a tenuously related topic to express these

views, or indeed to appear at all following even a cursory background check.”

Prof Marc Dweck, the chair of clinical cardiology at the University of Edinburgh, told the Guardian: “I think that Dr Malhotra’s opinions on both statins and Covid vaccines are misguided and in fact dangerous. The vast majority of cardiologists do not agree with his views and they are not based upon robust science.

“I would strongly urge patients to disregard his comments, which seem to be more concerned with furthering his profile (he does not have a cardiology career to speak of) rather than the wellbeing of the public. The BBC should not provide a platform for his views and should go to much greater lengths to research the people they invite to comment.”

Dr Matt Kneale, the co-chair of the Doctors’ Association, said Malhotra’s appearance was “deeply dangerous behaviour” and called on the General Medical Council to take action.

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The BHF said: “The scientific consensus is that the benefits of Covid-19 vaccination, including a reduced risk of severe illness or death, far outweigh the very small risk of rare side-effects.”

A BBC spokesperson said: “Dr Aseem Malhotra was invited on to the BBC News Channel to talk about the latest Nice recommendations on statins. During the discussion he made unprompted claims about the Covid mRNA vaccine.

“We then asked Prof Peter Openshaw, who represents the overwhelming scientific consensus on the vaccine, to be interviewed on air on this topic and he challenged and rebutted the claims that had been made.”

Malhotra told the Guardian: “Medical science is ever-evolving - discussing new developments openly is hard because the complicit media wants to only frame mRNA as right or wrong, to conflate mRNA vaccine debate as an entire attack on all vaccines, and to politicise views as left or right

