

Newspapers biased toward reporting early studies that may later be refuted

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Newspaper coverage of biomedical research leans heavily toward reports of initial findings, which are frequently attenuated or refuted by later studies, leading to disproportionate media coverage of potentially misleading early results, according to a report published Sep. 12 in the open access journal *PLOS ONE*.

The researchers, led by Francois Gonon of the University of Bordeaux, used ADHD ([attention deficit hyperactivity disorder](#)) as a test case and identified 47 scientific research papers published during the 1990's on the topic that were covered by 347 newspaper articles. Of the top 10 articles covered by the media, they found that 7 were initial studies. All 7 were either refuted or strongly attenuated by later research, but these later studies received much less media attention than the earlier papers.

The authors write that, if this phenomenon is generalizable to other health topics, it likely causes a great deal of distortion in health [science communication](#).

More information: Gonon F, Konsman J-P, Cohen D, Boraud T (2012) Why Most Biomedical Findings Echoed by Newspapers Turn Out to be False: The Case of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. *PLoS ONE* 7(9): e44275.
[doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0044275](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0044275)

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