



Wisconsin State Journal

Monday, August 21, 2006, Madison, Wi... It was front-page above the fold news demanding a full color photograph and a giant font proclaiming: “Brain research is key to hope.” This was a really big deal about the great importance of animal experiments at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and even better, it was a story written by someone other than one of the university’s usual lackeys at the Wisconsin State Journal. Wow.

Except, the author of the article, William Celis, of Public Access Journalism, didn’t write the section about research at the UW, and the big color photo had nothing whatsoever to do with Celis’s story as he wrote it or as it was originally published. And, the actual research being pointed to by Celis in his original article had nothing to do with the UW or even animal research.

The State Journal added the large color photograph of Charles Landry leering at a rat trapped in an environmentally bleak plastic box to stealthily proclaim its real reason for running the story in the first place. Landry is an assistant professor in psychiatry at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health. The text about Landry’s research at the UW was substituted for Celis’s original text. You can compare them in toto yourself.

The original was titled “Addiction treatment catching up with ground-breaking brain and genetic research” and can be read here: http://stories.silenttreatment.info/medical_01.asp

The University of Wisconsin State Journal’s unattributed rewrite can be found here: <http://www.madison.com/archives/read.php?ref=/wsj/2006/08/21/0608200377.php>

A brief comparison of the key differences:

<p>Addiction treatment catching up with ground-breaking brain and genetic research Public Access Journalism</p> <p>(William Celis teaches journalism at the University of Southern California’s Annenberg School for Communication. He is a former reporter for The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal.)</p>	<p>Brain research is key to hope New Drugs, New Approach Fuel Major Efforts For Many To Have Productive Lives</p> <p>Wisconsin State Journal :: FRONT :: A1 Monday, August 21, 2006 WILLIAM CELIS Public Access Journalism</p>
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While downing those first few drinks or pills may be a choice, 20 studies conducted over as many years indicate that, from there, genetics may take over for up to half of addicted Americans. In 1987, Brookhaven National Laboratory became the first research institution to use imaging to study brain changes in the aging, obese or addicted. Led by Nora Volkow, now the director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, researchers at the Upton, N.Y., lab documented alterations in the brain linked to drug abuse, alcoholism or other impulse behaviors that suggested a genetic predisposition to addiction. Subsequent research, increasingly sophisticated, has made stronger connections between addiction and genetics.

The discovery, based on extensive medical study, has led to a growing sense that a connect-the-dots approach is needed at every turn to help people like Bryant, who has clearly benefited from his first comprehensive treatment plan — he's been clean since that summer two years ago.

"It's a good time to be addicted," said Thomas McLellan, the founder and executive director of the Treatment Research Institute in Philadelphia, a research think tank that attempts to influence clinical practice and public policy through scientific and real-world studies. "The treatment is beginning to catch up with research. This will save a ton of money and, more importantly, lives."

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While downing those first few drinks or pills may be a choice, studies show genetics may take over for up to half of addicted Americans.

Researchers have documented alterations in the brain linked to drug abuse, alcoholism or other impulse behaviors that suggested a genetic predisposition to addiction.

In Madison, important research is looking at the impact of nicotine on adolescent rats, which may show why some young human smokers become addicted quickly.

Also funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, studies by Charles Landry, an assistant professor in psychiatry at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health, have shown that brains of young rats show a dramatic response to an injection of nicotine equivalent to two or three cigarettes. Adult rats do not show the same response.

"We're looking for biochemical markers that may help us distinguish whether the adolescent brain responds differently to drugs like nicotine, compared to the adult brain," Landry said.

Because adolescent rat brains are similar to young human brains in many ways, the research may answer questions about why teenagers report tobacco withdrawal symptoms after less smoking than adults.

And because nearly all addicted smokers started as adolescents, such research may mark the way toward reducing tobacco addiction.

"It makes sense to look at the biochemistry to try to get a hint at what might be going on in the human brain," said Landry, a

	<p>molecular neurobiologist.</p> <p>\ Saving money, lives</p> <p>The discovery of genetic predisposition has led to a growing sense that a connect-the-dots approach is needed at every turn to help people like Bryant, who has clearly benefited from his first comprehensive treatment plan -- he's been clean since that summer two years ago.</p> <p>"It's a good time to be addicted," said Thomas McLellan, the founder and executive director of the Treatment Research Institute in Philadelphia, a research think tank that attempts to influence clinical practice and public policy through scientific and real-world studies. "The treatment is beginning to catch up with research. This will save a ton of money and, more importantly, lives."</p>
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The part of Celis's story, left out by the UWSJ, undermines the implications of the UWSJ rewrite.

Celis:

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UWSJ:

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In Madison, important research is looking at the impact of nicotine on adolescent rats, which may show why some young human smokers become addicted quickly.

Celis points to Volkow's scans of the brains of aged, obese, and addicted humans. The UWSJ rewrite simply dismisses Volkow's work altogether without mention and says instead that Landry's experiments with rats and nicotine are "important." The word

nicotine does not occur in the Celis article. The UWSJ rewrite is misleading, dishonest, and seems intended to promote research at the University of Wisconsin about which the rewriter and editorial staff have little understanding. Go Bucky!

Once I realized that the UWSJ had duped its readers and misrepresented its own rewriting as being from the pen of an assumedly uninterested third party, I wrote to Mr. Celis and to Public Access Journalism. Their replies were less than reassuring. Essentially, they said that once written, they don't care very much about having their articles rewritten. Maybe this says something about what they really mean by "public access."

You can read the notes I received from them below.

What this situation discloses is 1. an author's name on a WSJ article does not mean very much; 2. the Wisconsin State Journal is hell-bent on spinning history and current events to support the UW's excuses for hurting animals.

The WSJ should change its name to the University of Wisconsin State Journal.

From: Jane McDonnell
Sent: Mon 8/28/2006 2:20 PM
To: Bogle, Rick A.
Cc: william celis
Subject: Re: New drugs, new approach ...

Rick:

Thanks for your email on William Celis' article. I know he'll be contacting you, but I wanted to send a short note as well about the Wisconsin State Journal version of our new research story.

As you surmised, it looks as though those editing the story decided they wanted a "local" voice and information they deemed more important, or perhaps more recent. They didn't contact us beforehand. Unfortunately, part of the journalism process is that once we distribute the stories through McClatchy-Tribune News Service, we have little control over how they are used, unless the changes make the story either inaccurate or libelous. My best advice would be to write a letter to the editor, questioning the changes.

Hope that helps, and we're happy to hear you preferred our version.

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I read the article by William Celis, New drugs, new approach fuel major efforts for many to have productive lives, in the August 21, Wisconsin State Journal.

Visiting the PAJ website, I discovered that the article (all five parts) is already available.

As surprising as this fact was -- that an already published series would be a front page story -- I was more surprised by the revisions in the Wisconsin State Journal leaving out mention of Nora Volkow's 1987 research.

In place of this, the paper inserted dubious claims about the importance of University of Wisconsin researcher Charles Landry's current studies on nicotine using rats.

Your website states that your journalists have the time to fully research health, education and cultural issues for each story.

Did Mr. Celis pen these revisions? Did he actually decide that Wisconsin's current repetitive research is more important than Volkow's?

A quick look around the internet reveals no other newspapers rewriting this story.

If, in fact, this was done by the Wisconsin State Journal without your knowledge, what will you do about it?

If you approved these changes, I would really like to learn why.

The WSJ article is available on line at:
<http://www.madison.com/wsj/mad/top/index.php?ntid=95672&ntpid=1>

Thanks in advance.
Rick Bogle

I would be very interested in your personal observations on this matter.

Thanks for your time. BTW, I think the original is superior and more factual than the WSJ version.

From: William Celis

Sent: Mon 8/21/2006 5:10 PM
To: Bogle, Rick A.
Subject: Re: New drugs, new approach ...

Dear Mr. Bogle,
Thank you for your note. I haven't seen the WSJ story; most newspapers and their websites have run the stories as they were written and edited. I have noticed, however, that a small number of other dailies around the country have edited, compressed, rewritten the PAJ stories, but I haven't noticed any insertion of material that I did not personally report or check.

Let me check with my editor abt this, and I'll get back to you.

Best, Bill

From: William Celis
Sent: Monday, September 18, 2006 2:54 PM
To: Rick Bogle
Subject: Re: August 21, Wisconsin State Journal article

Dear Mr. Bogle,

Pardon the tardy reply. I was traveling and then in transit from California to Texas.

You should have heard from my editor, Jane McDonnell at Public Access Journalism, about the WSJ changes. I know from my years as a reporter with the New York Times that when my stories went out on the NYT News Service, local newspapers could, and in many instances did, change my stories, inserting local reaction to the story or adding local angles to my national stories. (The Charlotte Observer, for instance, completely rewrote my main story, not improving it in the least, in my estimation. But they have they editorial right to do that, providing the editing does not render a story inaccurate.)

This is what the Wisconsin State Journal did, and what the WSJ did is fairly common practice at newspapers that use national stories. I cannot vouch for the University of Wisconsin researcher's work because I did not interview him. So I can't really render an opinion on his work. But the research I cite in the story is widely considered to the gold standard for research on how the brain works and its relationship to addictions of every kind.

I don't know if this answers your questions, or address what, if any, reservations you may have abt the WSJ's story. But, to repeat myself, the insertion of local material in national stories is common practice. Thanks for reading the series. The package of stories received wide play across the country, and I hope the stories help people. Best wishes, Bill