



Short and Sweet: The Appalling
Decline in Mainstream
Journalism

Hatchard Report

Dr. Guy Hatchard

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The lead article in the New Zealand Herald on 21st July entitled “[Wellington company director Finlay Thompson loses 30kg taking Ozempic, wants medication funded](#)” was written by youthful journalist Ethan Manera. Ethan, who began his career in 2023, is described by the newspaper as a multimedia journalist bringing us premium expert opinion.



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The article recounts the case of company director Finlay Thompson who was overweight at 138kg at the beginning of last year. The enterprising Finlay enrolled in what the article described as a US-based drug trial of Ozempic. As a result, he received free treatment for weight loss. His weight fell as he continued with the weekly injections of Ozempic and after nine months stabilised at 108kg. He is worried that his period of free treatment is coming to an end and he is now asking the government to fund Ozempic for people like himself who wish to lose weight.

Finlay, who is managing director of Dragonfly, a high flying international data analysis company based in Wellington, told the paper that he had struggled with his weight because he overeats. According to Finlay “*I have no off button*”. Finlay had tried a number of diets over the years and sometimes succeeded in losing weight, but always eventually put the weight back on. Finlay now sees Ozempic as a simple permanent solution, if only the government will financially back him and others like him.

Unbelievably, in compiling his front page article urging the government to fund the medication, Ethan forgot to mention that Ozempic costs \$1550 for each one month’s supply. The 2021 NZ Health Survey found that one third of adults are overweight, in total about 1.35 million people. If the government were to fund Ozempic as a universal weight loss drug, the annual cost would be up to \$25 billion if everyone opted in, close to our present entire national health budget.

No worries though, the article ploughs on quoting Finlay: “*When you’re carrying around that extra weight, life is quite hard, it’s not fun, every day is a problem*”. No doubt Finlay is right, obesity is a known risk factor for a number of health conditions including heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, liver disease, sleep apnea and certain cancers, but is Ozempic a permanent or even safe solution? Short answer: NO.

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Buried somewhere in the article was a telling sentence. *“Thompson’s drug trial, however, has a catch; next month he has to stop taking Ozempic and begin a new medication.”* You see, Finlay’s free drug trial was not testing Ozempic per se. Ozempic has been approved for the treatment of type 2 diabetes since 2017 and is available here in NZ for the condition. The drug trial was to test the effect of a secondary medication designed to alleviate the problems associated with stopping Ozempic. How Ethan missed highlighting this point is mind boggling.

Read the scientific literature and you will find that Ozempic is a drug in growing trouble. [Clinical research](#) findings on the safety of Ozempic indicate that its active ingredient semaglutide induces primarily mild and transient gastrointestinal (GI) disturbances and increases the risk of cholelithiasis (gallstones), but recent findings by researchers also suggest a long-term risk of pancreatic cancer, thyroid cancer, and diabetic retinopathy (DRP, which can cause blindness).

An article on July 4th in the UK Daily Mail warns [“Ozempic could make you go BLIND warn experts as worrying study finds patients on the drug are more likely to suffer irreversible optic nerve damage”](#). The medical director at NHS England warned the drugs can be dangerous and [should not be seen as a ‘quick fix’](#) ;for people who *‘just want to lose a few pounds’*. The article reports side effects including loss of sexual function, kidney damage, organ failure, cancer, and many more

An article on June 3rd headlined [“Woman will never eat solid food again after weight-loss drug caused horror bowel injury that nearly killed her – as ‘thousands’ suffer devastating side-effects from Ozempic and Mounjaro, bombshell lawsuit claims”](#). The suit claims that conditions linked to Ozempic, Mounjaro and similar drugs include gastroparesis (stomach paralysis), bowel obstruction and intestinal blockage. [Attorneys allege](#) the drugs have also caused *‘malnutrition, dehydration, neurological disorders, and even death’*.

A 11th July headline shouted [“Shocking number of people are QUITTING Ozempic amid growing list of debilitating side effects”](#). It reports a study of US pharmacy data showing 9 out of 10 people quit using semaglutide drugs early because of adverse effects. The drug has even been cited as causing the loss of a sense of fun, contributing to cases of depression and suicide. The findings are also significant because previous research shows that when patients come off the drugs, as many as 80 percent put the kilograms back on.

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Novo Nordisk, Ozempic's maker, pushed back replying to the Mail: it *'does not believe these data are sufficient to draw conclusions about overall patient adherence and persistence to various GLP-1 medicines, including our treatments.'* No wonder there is a desire to postpone concern to a distant future, Novo made a profit of NZ\$15 billion in the first three months of 2024 alone on the back of its weight loss drugs.

It does only take a minute to find articles like those above, and many more in other newspapers, along with references in learned journals. So how did premium expert journalist Ethan miss them? Perhaps in his rush to make the front page, he didn't have time to look:) Or if he did do his due diligence, did he think that putting a superficial gloss on the facts would be just right for his readers or did he perhaps decide to shield Novo Nordisk from any criticism? You tell me.

Weight loss methods are one of the biggest lifestyle business sectors on the planet. This makes weight loss a very attractive target for pharmaceutical companies anxious to profit from the new class of biologic drugs that alter the fundamental parameters of our physiological functions. Biologics are drugs that promise miracle cures but typically cause very high rates of serious side effects as Ozempic does (see our article "[The Fundamental Flaw in Biotech Medicine](#)" for more information on biologics and regulatory issues).

How much of our so-called journalism is now covert advertising and lobbying we may never know. Ethan could have looked a little more deeply into alternative approaches to weight loss that don't involve high cost and shocking side effects, but he chose not to, instead touting an injection that for many recipients will ruin their health. Sound familiar? This all goes to illustrate the misleading content of much mainstream journalism these days. This comes at a time when our health system is collapsing and excess deaths are at record levels, a time when we need informing and protecting more than ever before. Journalism seems to be absent at the wheel. Here in NZ people who do research, ask questions and expect answers have been labelled conspiracy theorists, what should we call journalists who don't ask questions? Any ideas?

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