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The Limits of Science Reporting

The performance of US media in conveying accurate information has come under review in the United States recently, following the revelation that even the *New York Times* has printed false despatches by more than one reporter. The scandal drew attention to long established problems of accuracy in US media. These arise from many sources, from inadequate procedures to economic and political pressures.

Science reporting shares the same difficulties, heightened by specific economic and political pressures and motivations. Cases of inaccurate reports abound, some never corrected. One vulnerability is the fact that most if not nearly all reporters are not equipped with resources, training or up to date experience to judge new scientific claims except through credentials. As a result, science reporters, editors and authors in US media currently serve as a largely uncritical pipeline from scientific experts in established institutions and corporations to the public. Second opinions and reviews are insufficiently covered in major controversies such as global warming and AIDS science.

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