

Best Available Science

Dennis K. McBride

Academic President of the
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Policymakers, judges, government agency staff, lawmakers, scientists, and others must constantly balance scientific, social, economic, political, emotional and other considerations when making a decision. However, they are often "on their own" to determine the validity and applicability of scientific and technical data as they ask themselves, "How reliable is the information in front of me? What is the level of maturity of the underlying science, and can I make a sound decision based on it?"

Dennis K. McBride, Ph.D., Academic President of the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, will discuss the book *Best Available Science* that he co-authored with researchers from the Institute for Regulatory Science. This book is the culmination of three decades of insight from experts in the scientific and policy worlds, who have developed a process to enable not only scientists, but also non-scientists, to clearly and easily assess scientific information. The book isolates scientific issues from other issues at play in policymaking. It provides a framework for understanding the validity of scientific information that can be universally understood. It gives decision makers a simple assessment system to most effectively utilize scientific information. It also separates science from areas that are outside of the purview of science.

As we continue to strive for excellence in both science and policy in an ever-changing landscape, *Best Available Science* is a must-have resource. It arms you with the ability to

make the best decision possible with the best available information. This guide can also be used as a tool for scientists to more clearly communicate with policy makers and help them to "speak the same language."

McBride is an evolutionary psychologist with an extensive background in the science of human evolution. Prior to *Best Available Science*, he co-authored *Quantifying Human Information Processing*. As an active adjunct faculty member at Georgetown University's medical school and Public Policy Institute, he has also held appointments as professor in colleges of engineering and arts and sciences.

Saturday, Dec 12, 2009
1:30 pm

National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Blvd, Room 110
Arlington, VA 22230
(Ballston Metro stop)

Enter NSF from the corner of 9th N & N Stuart Streets.
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National Capital Area Skeptics Public Lecture Series


20/20 SINCE 1987

Torn From Today's Headlines

Review of *Autism: Made in the USA*

Kudos to Sandra A. Lange, whose review of Gary Null's new documentary film, *Autism: Made in the USA*, appeared in the October 29 issue of *Greenbelt News Review*: "*Autism: Made in the USA* presented a very one-sided and perhaps dangerous point of view... They asserted that the causes of autism were environmental and vaccinations with mercury as primary culprits. They backed this up with interviews of people identified as doctors and nurses. However, they had no nationally recognized medical professional or organization which confirmed their point of view. They had no empirical scientific data to determine cause and effect. Yet, they advocated that people, especially children, should not be vaccinated against the flu virus and other childhood diseases...Such films can be very misleading and sometimes harmful. The [Utopia Film Festival] committee might want to be more careful in including films which espouse medical findings without a sound basis in fact."

Readers may remember director Null from his appearances on PBS TV stations during pledge weeks beginning in the late 1990s. His infomercials about his "anti-aging process" and "alternative health" continue to air on some PBS stations, yet some of his more controversial views (for example, that AIDS is not caused by HIV) have never been presented there. Locally he hosts an afternoon show ("Natural Living") on WPFW-FM. Steven Salzberg, a genome researcher and computational biologist at the University of Maryland, comments: "[Null] claims to have published 'scholarly and academic papers,' but the journals listed on his site

are not real journals: *The Townsend Letter for Doctors & Patients* (not a journal), *The Journal of Orthomolecular Medicine* (a journal apparently devoted to non-scientific 'alternative' medical claims, not indexed in *PubMed* and apparently now defunct), and the *Journal of Applied Nutrition*, a non-scientific journal dedicated to supplements, and published by something called International and American Associations of Clinical Nutritionists. None of these are real journals. A *PubMed* search revealed exactly one article by him, from 1982, a non-technical article about the medical uses of garlic." Dr. Salzberg's November 2008 NCAS lecture on "Autism & Vaccines: How Bad Science Confuses the Press & Harms the Public," is available at the NCAS YouTube channel, YouTube.com/NCASVideo. 

Drinking Skeptically

On Wednesday, December 9, come to Jackie's Restaurant at 8081 Georgia Ave. in Silver Spring at 7:00 p.m. to join fellow NCASers for the next DC-area *Drinking Skeptically* event. *Drinking Skeptically* is an informal social event designed to promote fellowship and networking among skeptics, critical-thinkers, and like-minded individuals.

Don't drink? Don't let that stop you from joining us! Some of the world's most famous skeptics are teetotalers, and we are happy to have you!

ncas.org/ds-ncas.html

www.jackiesrestaurant.com

www.drinkingskeptically.org

There's no cover charge, and if you order from their very reasonably-priced menu, you'll be delighted. (January's *Washingtonian* magazine rated Jackie's #78 of all DC-area restaurants.) 