Joe Rogan and Spotify Amplify AIDS Denialism

Podcaster Joe Rogan and his guest Bret Weinstein question whether HIV causes AIDS and suggest "party drugs" are an "important factor."

February 16, 2024 By Trent Straube

BREAKING NEWS: Water is wet, and HIV causes AIDS. If you tuned in to the nation's No. 1 podcast on Spotify, The Joe Rogan Experience, on February 13, you might have thought you were listening to a conversation from the 1980s. The controversial host and his equally out-there guest that day, Bret Weinstein, an evolutionary biology professor, promoted long-disproven ideas that HIV does not cause AIDS and that in fact recreational drugs, such as poppers—popular among gay men—could be "a very important factor in AIDS."

To be clear, HIV does cause AIDS. (Poppers do not.) Stating otherwise is known as AIDS denialism, various forms of which have been around as long as the epidemic itself. The idea that HIV does not cause AIDS has been discredited time and time again, including in numerous social media posts rebutting the dangerous claims made on Rogan's show (several examples of which are posted here).

> Nice of Bret to use his appearance in front of millions of listeners on Rogan today to talk about how he is now an HIV/AIDS denialist. He finds the evidence that AIDS is not caused by HIV but by the gay lifestyle to be "surprisingly compelling." pic.twitter.com/qICMz7Z3nW
>
> — bad_stats ???????????????? (@thebadstats) February 14, 2024

Perhaps it's not surprising that Rogan and Weinstein dredged up this HIV misinformation. After all, as Forbes and Vice report, Weinstein has often advanced anti-vaccine theories and COVID-19 misinformation, including promoting ivermectin, the antiparasitic med, as a treatment for COVID.

It appears @BretWeinstein has embraced the conspiracy theory that "poppers" and not HIV are the cause of AIDS. He claims the alternate theory is not laughable - it is. I'm a gay physician who works with HIV patients, Bret, and I have questions for you: https://t.co/ikrPBKE0qs

— Jonathan Laxton MD, FRCPC ??????????? (@dr_jon_l) February 14, 2024

What's more, in contributing to AIDS denialism, Weinstein presented "evidence" from a book by anti-vaxxer Robert F. Kennedy (yes, the one running for president). Weinstein also promoted now-debunked theories and took several swipes at Anthony Fauci, MD, who led the nation's efforts against both HIV and COVID-19. (Fauci was director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases from 1984 to 2022, when he retired, and he remains a popular target of right-wing conspiracy theorists.)

Dear @BretWeinstein @joerogan @RobertKennedyJr

In 1995 Skeptic investigated the claim that HIV is not causally connected to AIDS.

We examined Peter Duesberg, Kary Mullis, Robert Root-Bernstein, et al.

They are all wrong (as is RFKJ) & we show why

here:https://t.co/C9UuzX7qPX https://t.co/gOefzCkWml

— Michael Shermer (@michaelshermer) February 14, 2024

We're not going to give Rogan and Weinstein's dangerous crackpot theories any more space (Vice includes a solid roundup of the discussion). But if you need a primer on the science behind HIV, check out the POZ Basics, particularly the section "HIV Transmission and Risk."

And be sure to read the Ask POZ column "How do we know that HIV causes AIDS?"

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/joe-rogan-spotify-amplify-aids-denialism