CNN: "Scientific" Means "Agrees With Us"

"Trump adds coronavirus adviser who echoes his unscientific claims," reports CNN's Kaitlan Collins.

Collins neither makes any scientific claims of her own, nor uses actual science to rebut any claims made by that adviser — Dr. Scott Atlas — or President Donald Trump himself, in the article under that headline. She merely notes that Atlas disagrees with claims made by the "experts" her bosses at CNN agree with, and expects the reader to accept that disagreement with those favored "experts" flies in the face of "science."

I'm going to go out on a limb here and suggest that Ms. Collins's Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Political Science from the University of Alabama may not put her in the same league as Dr. Atlas when it comes to proffering scientific and medical judgments.

Resolved: Dr. Scott W. Atlas is, by any objective measure, an "expert" in the field of medicine. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Biology from the University of Illinois and an MD from the University of Chicago's Pritzker School of Medicine. He's published more than 100 peer-reviewed articles on the use of MRIs in neurological disorders. He helped write the qualifying exam in neuroradiology. He served as Professor and Chief of Neuroradiology at Stanford University Medical Center, currently serves as Senior Fellow at Stanford's Hoover Institution where he works on health policy issues, and has advised three Republican presidential nominees on health policy.

The man obviously knows his medicine. So should we simply accept as gospel anything and everything he has to say, on the subject of COVID-19 or on anything else? Of course not. He may be an "expert," but it's the responsibility of every individual to judge his claims against the facts.

The same is true of CNN favorites like Dr. Anthony Fauci and Dr. Deborah Birx. Their credentials and qualifications put them in the "experts" category and entitle them to a respectful hearing, but they're not omniscient and unquestionable demigods.

This ongoing duel over which "experts" to trust incorporates two faulty assumptions. One is that "experts" must be trusted rather than tested. Another is that "experts" can never disagree.

The duel also demonstrates that "public health" is at least as much a political ideology as a scientific endeavor, and that politics doesn't end at science's edge.

The truth will out, eventually. In the meantime, it's probably a bad idea to let CNN choose "experts" for you.