



Posted On: **January 20, 2011** by **Patrick A. Malone**

## **Hype Busters: Helping You Get Better Health Care**

An overdose of news media hype has long been a problem for consumers who want high quality health care but don't want to bounce from health fad to health fad. Naive and uncritical journalists who write about health care issues are a huge source of the hype overdose. So it's great to learn about a Web resource that systematically and thoroughly reviews health news and rates the quality of the stories.

The site is the somewhat stodgily named **HealthNewsReview.org**. With a foundation grant, it employs a team of medical journalists and physicians to critically review health

Patrick A. Malone  
Patrick Malone & Associates, P.C.  
1331 H Street N.W.  
Suite 902  
Washington, DC 20005

[pmalone@patrickmalonelaw.com](mailto:pmalone@patrickmalonelaw.com)  
[www.patrickmalonelaw.com](http://www.patrickmalonelaw.com)  
202-742-1500  
202-742-1515 (fax)

news in major publications. The stories get rated on a scale of one to five stars, based on how well the following issues were addressed:

- What's the total cost?
- How often do benefits occur?
- How often do harms occur?
- How strong is the evidence?
- Is this condition exaggerated?
- Are there alternative options?
- Is this really a new approach?
- Is it available to me?
- Who's promoting this?
- Do they have a conflict of interest?

The site says its goal is: Holding Health and Medical Journalism Accountable. And it lives up to that by naming names and taking no prisoners on current health news.

A recent Wall Street Journal piece that suggested Vitamin B12 as a potential cure-all got a low two-star rating for putting out a series of unsubstantiated claims with loose anecdotes and little evidence.

Patrick A. Malone  
Patrick Malone & Associates, P.C.  
1331 H Street N.W.  
Suite 902  
Washington, DC 20005

[pmalone@patrickmalonelaw.com](mailto:pmalone@patrickmalonelaw.com)  
[www.patrickmalonelaw.com](http://www.patrickmalonelaw.com)  
202-742-1500  
202-742-1515 (fax)

A Denver Post article on an "anti-gravity treadmill" scored a lowly one star for glorifying an unproven product.

NPR and CNN Health scored highly for their well done columns on the recent research about antibiotics for kids with middle ear infection.

I give the site five stars for being a very useful resource. It asks the right questions about medical news and gives straight answers. I'm particularly keen on conflicts of interest and other things that tend to get underplayed in much coverage: for example, the hidden harms of touted new medical devices.

Article first published as [Hype Busters: Helping Patients Get Better Health Care With a Dose of Skepticism](#) on Technorati.

*People interested in learning more about our firm's legal services, including [medical malpractice in Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia](#), may ask questions or send us information about a particular case by phone or email. There is no charge for contacting us regarding your inquiry. A [malpractice attorney](#) will respond within 24 hours.*

*All contents copyrighted 2010 [Patrick Malone & Associates](#) except where copyright held by others. Reproduction in any form prohibited except where expressly granted.*

Patrick A. Malone  
Patrick Malone & Associates, P.C.  
1331 H Street N.W.  
Suite 902  
Washington, DC 20005

[pmalone@patrickmalonelaw.com](mailto:pmalone@patrickmalonelaw.com)  
[www.patrickmalonelaw.com](http://www.patrickmalonelaw.com)  
202-742-1500  
202-742-1515 (fax)