

From: David Balding ucbtdjb@live.ucl.ac.uk

Subject: Case number CAS-1876642-T7WTSZ

Date: 8 October 2013 13:14

To: ecu@bbc.co.uk

Dear Sir/Madam

I wish to have a proper response to my complaint CAS-1876642-T7WTSZ which was lodged on 17 January 2013. I received a response on 16 September 2013 (copied below). I cannot understand how it took 8 months to generate such an insubstantial response, just a few lines stating the obvious and that do not address any aspect of my complaint.

I would like to know:

1. Why Jim Naughtie was allowed to interview his friend Alistair Moffat without the personal connections being acknowledged? There is much evidence of a close relationship between the men - for example, Naughtie campaigned for Moffat to be elected Rector of St Andrews.
2. Why in the face of the most implausible claims by Moffat (some Brits having the same DNA as the Queen of Sheba, Eve's grandson living in Caithness) did Naughtie pose no challenging or probing question? The public was entirely misled by an interview that was full of falsehoods, none of them challenged.
3. Why was Moffat offered two opportunities to promote the website of his for-profit business? Naughtie was familiar with Moffat's business and must have known that the primary purpose of the interview was business promotion. There was no credible scientific content and so no other plausible purpose for the interview.
4. Why was the existence of the business interest kept from the audience? For example, Moffat told the audience that his service was "subsidised massively", an implausible claim that was later revealed to be false. Naughtie made no attempt to clarify the business connection or the "massively subsidised" claim, even though he was aware of his friend's business interest.
5. Why was no qualified scientist invited to comment on what was ostensibly a scientific matter?

Since my complaint was made in January, there has been much more BBC programming that has promoted Moffat's business interest. The Meet the Izzards programs on BBC TV devoted two hours to what was in effect a long advertisement for the main product of Britain's DNA (Moffat's company), the testing of "deep" genetic ancestry. Eddie Izzard's tweet to his 3 million followers promoting the web site of Britain's DNA revealed the commercial nature of the programs, which fundamentally misled the public. No independent scientist was invited to balance the misleading claims. James Wilson - chief scientist of Britain's DNA and a company Director - was allowed by the BBC to promote the interests of his company unchallenged. Soon

after, Michael Mosely participated in a meaningless promotional stunt on the One Show, which advertised the rather silly names that Britain's DNA gives to genetic types - these have no scientific value. I am also aware of many BBC radio interviews, including previous interviews of Moffat on the Today programme, with no merit in terms of scientific or public interest.

I am concerned that Moffat is a former television executive who has at least one close contact in the BBC (Naughtie) and presumably many more. It appears to a reasonable outsider that Moffat has manipulated his personal connections at the BBC on a very large scale - to encourage and facilitate many hours of programming promoting the interest of his business. That the business has usually not been named only makes matters worse, because the public has been misled into believing that a worthwhile scientific project is being promoted. In every case there has been no qualified scientist invited to try to comment on or correct the errors, which suggests to me that Moffat wields great influence in the BBC that has allowed him to block proper balance. The result has been extensive BBC coverage misleading the public about genetic ancestry, with adverse implication for sensitive topics such as ethnic identity.

I had hoped that the 8 month delay in responding to my previous complaint was because you were investigating at least some of these issues, but I was appalled by your response that trivialised the issues I raised: it seems to have required 30 mins effort, not 8 months.

Yours sincerely

David Balding
Professor of Statistical Genetics
University College London