Spotify does nothing as Joe Rogan peddles vaccine misinformation

After Baylor microbiology professor and public health advocate Peter Hotez, MD Ph.D. tweeted out a *Motherboard* article about Spotify's lack of moderation of Joe Rogan's misinformation after a podcast episode with guest Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., Rogan challenged him to debate Robert F Kennedy, Jr, proposing a $100,000 donation to a charity of Hotez's choosing if he agreed.

In the episode, Rogan and Kennedy hit all the pandemic classics: conspiracy theories about vaccines, 5G and Wi-Fi technology, and ivermectin. All common tropes of covid pandemic conspiracy theories.

Twitter's owner Elon Musk joined the Twitter fray, accusing Hotez of "hating charity" by not accepting the debate, and after hours of Elon and Rogan stans taunting Hotez, the professor tweeted, "I was just was stalked in front of my home by a couple of antivaxers taunting me to debate RFKJr."

That adds a troubling new dynamic to this story, particularly in the context of the *Motherboard* story that started this, which touched on Spotify's contortions to allow Rogan's misinformation to remain on the platform. In the article, a Spotify spokesperson is quoted as saying that because Rogan and Kennedy never said covid vaccines were *designed* to kill people, the episode wasn't in violation of the rules.

Spotify signed a $100 million deal with Rogan over three years ago, and established a new set of misinformation policies

after several high-profile stars had their music removed from the platform in protest of Rogan’s vaccine claims, which had previously gone unaddressed by Spotify.

Even with the policies in place, conspiracies highlighted on *The Joe Rogan Experience* can go viral as social media spreads the claims. To date, according to JREmissing, a site that tracks episodes of the podcast that have been removed, 111 episodes have been taken down.

Since Hotez’s original tweet, Rogan tweeted and retweeted criticisms and insinuations about Hotez — who has been a guest on the podcast in the past — a few times over the next several hours prior to Hotez’s tweet about being stalked.

We’ve reached out to Spotify for comment on the story and will update with a response if we get one.

Update June 18, 2023, 2:56ET PT: *Updated the headline and added more details about the recent Rogan podcast episode.*

https://www.theverge.com/2023/6/18/23765217/joe-rogan-spotify-covid-vaccine-debate-elon-musk