

## Doctors Eithan Haim (Whistleblower), Thomas Stockmann (Fictional), and the Tall Poppy Syndrome

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### Abstract

Playwright Henrik Ibsen's "An Enemy of the People" (1882) concerns a doctor's scientific discovery that will benefit the citizenry. Instead, the good doctor receives political and financial pushback causing him and his wife to lose everything. His story is compared to a modern-day whistleblower who suffers the same pushback and consequences. Times may change but people do not. Both are victims of the Tall Poppy Syndrome (TPS) [1-8].

**Keywords:** *Tall Poppy Syndrome; Tyranny of the Majority Institutional Resistance; Courage Conflict*

### Abbreviation

TPS: Tall Poppy Syndrome

### Introduction

Reading this article may remind some that life imitates art. The hypothesis is that observations about real behaviors or events sometimes are inspired or resemble works of art or fiction. I am uncertain if Dr. Haim is familiar with Henrik Ibsen or his play "An Enemy of the People". However, their situations were similar, possessing courage, fortitude, and justice. Both were victims of TPS even though their fictional versus real lives were more than a century apart.

### Case Studies

Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) was a celebrated Norwegian playwright, theater director, and poet. He is widely acknowledged as "the father of prose drama" and a trailblazer of Modernism in theater. Born in Skien, Norway, he started his theatrical career in 1851, working in theaters in Bergen and Oslo. In 1858, Ibsen married Suzannah Thoreson, with whom he had one son. His progressive views on marriage and society frequently stirred controversy.

Ibsen left Norway in 1864 and lived mainly in Italy and Germany. During this period, he wrote his most famous works, including "An Enemy of the People" (1882), a controversial play about social issues.

Ibsen's works often challenged societal norms and explored complex psychological themes. His influence extended to playwrights like George Bernard Shaw and Eugene O'Neill. Ibsen's last years were marked by illness, and he died on May 23, 1906, leaving a legacy as one of the greatest dramatists since Shakespeare [9].

Henrik Ibsen's play "An Enemy of the People" tells the story of Dr. Thomas Stockmann, a medical officer in a small Norwegian town. The town's economy relies heavily on its recently built public baths, which Dr. Stockmann discovers are contaminated with harmful bacteria.

Initially, Dr. Stockmann believes he will be hailed as a hero for his discovery. However, he soon faces opposition from his brother Peter, the town's mayor, who fears the economic consequences of closing the baths. The local newspaper, initially supportive, also turned against Dr. Stockmann due to pressure from the mayor and concerns about losing subscribers.

As Dr. Stockmann attempts to share his findings with the townspeople, he is systematically silenced and labeled an "enemy of the people". During a town meeting, he is prevented from discussing the baths. Instead, he delivers a passionate speech criticizing the "tyranny of the majority" and the corruption in society, further alienating him from the community.

The play concludes with Dr. Stockmann facing severe consequences for his stance. He loses his job, his daughter is fired from her teaching position, and his home is vandalized. Dr. Stockmann refuses to leave town or compromise his principles despite these hardships. He decides to stay and open a school to teach children to think independently [10].

Dr. Eithan Haim is a 34-year-old general surgeon working at a Texas regional hospital. He gained national attention as a whistleblower who exposed gender-affirming care practices at Texas Children's Hospital (TCH).

Haim completed his medical education at Charles E Schmidt College of Medicine at Florida Atlantic University. From 2018 to 2023, he was a surgical resident at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, where he also trained at Texas Children's Hospital. In 2022, while still a resident, Haim discovered that TCH was inserting puberty blocker implants in young patients with gender dysphoria.

Gender-related treatments, including surgery and the prescription of puberty suppressors and other hormones, had been recently defined under Texas Family Code 261.001 as abuse per an opinion issued by Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton in 2022.

Haim documented firsthand accounts of the clinics' ongoing operations, authenticating that some doctors and nurses ignored the law behind closed doors. He leaked the information to Christopher Rufo, a conservative reporter. In March 2023, a City Journal story detailed the gender-affirming care he had witnessed firsthand at TCH [11]. The hospital continued to perform gender transitions on children even after declaring a moratorium on the practice.

Haim admitted his actions in 2024 and faced severe consequences. The U.S. Department of Justice charged him with four felonies for allegedly violating HIPAA, a patient privacy law. If convicted, Haim could face up to a decade in federal prison. The Haims lost close friendships and savings due to the legal battle.

However, on January 26, 2025, federal prosecutors dropped the charges against Dr. Haim. Haim expressed relief and surprise at the decision and thanked President Trump for his support [12].

Dr. Haim continues to work as a general surgeon at a regional hospital in Texas, dealing with various medical emergencies. He remains vocal about his opposition to gender-affirming care for minors, believing that individuals who identify as transgender require mental health support rather than medical interventions.

### Discussion

“An Enemy of the People” and the real-life figure Dr. Eithan Haim share thematic similarities, particularly regarding the conflict between individual morality and public opinion as well as challenges faced by whistleblowers when confronting societal or institutional issues.

In “An Enemy of the People,” Dr. Thomas Stockmann discovers that the water in the town’s baths is contaminated. He faces backlash when he insists on publicizing the truth, as the town’s economy heavily relies on the baths. Similarly, Dr. Eithan Haim, if involved in exposing any health or environmental issues, might encounter similar challenges while standing up for scientific truth in the face of opposition.

Dr. Stockmann’s battle is not just with the townspeople but also with the authorities who prioritize economic interests over public health. This mirrors the experiences of many whistleblowers, including figures like Dr. Haim, who might confront institutional resistance when advocating for transparency and change.

Dr. Stockmann and modern whistleblowers like Dr. Haim can experience alienation and vilification when their findings threaten the status quo or economic interests. The societal pressure to conform and the challenge of standing alone against widespread opposition require courage, fortitude, and justice.

Both figures highlight the tension between doing what is morally right and facing the consequences of public disapproval. This universal theme resonates with anyone who has taken an unpopular stand based on science or ethical convictions.

These parallels illustrate enduring themes of integrity, courage, and the societal challenges faced by those who prioritize truth over convenience or profit.

### Conclusion

Both doctors were victims of TPS by various cutters and for differing reasons. A three-letter agency, the US Justice Department (DOJ), was weaponized and involved in cutting down Dr. Haim.

### IRB

All information herein is a matter of public record.

### Conflict of Interest

The author declares no financial or conflicts of interest.

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