



EDITORIAL

Stand Up for Science

Angela DeJulius

Kent City Health Department, AxxessPointe Community Health Centers, Immediate Past President, Associate Editor, Ohio Public Health Association

Published June 17, 2025 <https://doi.org/10.18061/ojph.v7i1.10584>

The Ohio Public Health Association and this journal have made it our mission to advance the science and practice of public health in Ohio. As professionals, our readers rely on rigorous evidence to practice prevention and work towards a healthier state and nation.

Without reliable data, we risk endangering human health by making decisions based on assumptions, ideology, or fear. The current federal administration's cuts to research and programs that support health should alarm us all.

For decades, the United States has invested in being the world leader in health science research and innovation. But as we watch the defunding of the NIH (where so far, cuts are estimated at \$2.7 billion), the CDC, and our universities, we will see the US lose its credibility and leadership of the global health research community. Our science workforce and infrastructure won't be quickly or easily rebuilt.

Science is a complex, self-correcting process of inquiry that, to many Americans, may seem obscure or abstract and, therefore, easy to defund. But behind every breakthrough there is a team of humans dedicating their careers to the work, and if we don't fund them today, we'll never have the miracle treatments of tomorrow. In 1980, glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) was discovered, and it wasn't until 45 years later that the first GLP-1 drug was approved by the FDA. A revolution in diabetes treatment and weight loss was launched. With an estimated 14.7% of adults having diabetes, and 2/3 of us either overweight or obese, it's not surprising that 1 in 6 Americans are now taking a GLP-1 medication such as Ozempic or Wegovy! The long-term impact on cardiovascular disease and mortality isn't known yet (so we must continue to fund research), but the point is that basic science happens decades before we see the innovations that improve our daily lives and health.

Meanwhile, the outside world is not standing still. The European Union recently announced its Choose Europe for Science initiative, budgeting €500 million (\$570 million) in new money in the years 2025–2027 “to make Europe a magnet for researchers” who want to continue their work outside the US rather than struggle under the current administration. France has committed an additional €100 million (\$114 million) to recruit scientists from abroad. No doubt, the brain drain will accelerate.

It's one thing to abandon science, another to actively deny and undermine it. Sometimes there is a clear motivation based on politics and profits – such as the deletion of the Surgeon General's 2024 Advisory on gun violence, disregarding the frankly alarming truth that firearm-related injuries are the leading cause of death for children and adolescents in this country. At other times, there seems to be no reason other than fixed beliefs and opinions about issues such as fluoride (now banned from public water supplies in Utah and Florida), or childhood lead exposure risks (apparently no longer a concern since the CDC's National Center for Environmental Health was gutted). Denying scientific data won't change the reality of these or countless other health threats.

Science is complex, our knowledge of the truth evolves, and communication of this is hard. But because science continuously pursues truth, because argument and debate are baked into the process, it will endure. You don't have to love basic science to appreciate what it does for us—our profession relies on the evidence to understand the truth and build new knowledge. As public health professionals, we need to stand up for science even if it sometimes feels like we're standing alone. We cannot succumb to the comfort of silence or despair. It's time for us to listen to our hearts, use our brains, and find our courage.

