



Public Health Policy Must Be Guided by Facts, Not Politics or Special Interests

In times of crisis, public health decisions shape lives. These decisions must be grounded in facts, evidence, and the best available science. Unfortunately, public health policy is often influenced by politics, commercial interests, and social pressures. The result? Confused messages, poor health outcomes, and lost public trust. The only way to protect public health and rebuild public confidence is to demand that policy be rooted in objective evidence—not ideology, not lobbying, and not misinformation.

The Danger of Non-Evidence-Based Policy

When policy-makers base decisions on political gains or pressure from special interest groups, they risk creating harm. This can look like ignoring scientific advice, delaying lifesaving interventions, or promoting ineffective or even dangerous solutions.

Public trust collapses when people realise they are being misled or when they see inconsistent health guidance. Once lost, this trust is extremely difficult to restore. A population that does not trust its health leaders will hesitate to follow even sound advice.

The Role of Disinformation, Misinformation, and Malinformation

Understanding how false information spreads is key to safeguarding public health. There are three main types:

1. **Disinformation**
False information spread deliberately to deceive, often driven by political, financial, or ideological motives. An example would be intentionally promoting false claims about vaccine safety to discourage uptake.
2. **Misinformation**
False information shared without intent to harm. For example, someone may pass on incorrect health advice because they believe it is true, such as sharing an unproven home remedy for COVID-19.
3. **Malinformation**
Information based on truth, but used out of context or intended to cause harm. For instance, revealing personal health data of public figures to undermine them or distort public debate.

All three forms confuse the public and erode the quality of public debate. The consequences can be deadly in a health emergency.



Why Evidence-Based Policy Matters

Evidence-based policy relies on research, data, and expert consensus. It follows a disciplined process of testing and validation, adapts to new information, and is transparent and open to challenge.

When decisions are grounded in evidence, the public receives clear, consistent advice. Resources are directed to interventions that actually work, saving lives and preventing harm. Managing risk effectively through evidence-driven strategies protects communities and builds resilience.

This approach also allows for the honest communication of uncertainty, which strengthens credibility. People do not expect perfection; they expect honesty.

The Path Forward

Public health agencies must protect themselves from political interference and special interest manipulation. Governments should ensure that independent scientific bodies guide policy, not politically, morally, or commercially biased entities. Media must commit to responsible reporting, avoiding sensationalism that distorts health information.

The public must be equipped with the knowledge to recognise false claims and understand basic health principles. Education is the strongest long-term defense against disinformation, misinformation, and malinformation.

Conclusion

The health of over one billion people and their families globally is too important to be left to politics or private interests. When public health policy is driven by facts and science, society thrives. When it is driven by ideology or profit, everyone suffers.

Change begins with awareness and action. As citizens, we have the power to hold our leaders accountable. Insist on transparency. Demand evidence-based decisions. Challenge misinformation wherever it spreads. Support policies that prioritize public health over political gain or corporate profit.

The cost of inaction is too high. Lives depend on truth, science, and the unwavering demand for integrity in public health policy. We must demand and defend evidence-based health policy. It is not just good governance; it is a moral duty.

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