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## Editorial

## International Society for Infectious Diseases – Sustained and continuous funding for WHO



The International Society for Infectious Diseases (ISID) strongly urges governments, the scientific research community, academic institutions, and global innovative leaders to continue supporting the World Health Organization (WHO)'s efforts to fight COVID-19. On April 14, 2020, the President of the United States announced his administration would withdraw funding for the World Health Organization (WHO). Withdrawing this funding from a leading global health organization pivotal in the COVID-19 response is short-sighted. There is no place for political interference in public health.

Infectious diseases hold no regard for political, geographic, or species boundaries. The emergence of new diseases has accelerated over the past century as a result of significant changes in land use, population growth, increase in global travel and trade, and animal husbandry practices. To this end, all nations and professional disciplines share a vital role in the infectious diseases arena and collaborative efforts are required to prevent public health emergencies.

The WHO, along with partnering organizations dedicated to infectious disease surveillance and control, operates for the benefit of all people in all regions. Throughout its history, the WHO has led the global campaign against infectious diseases, despite its limited budget and narrow mandate. Because of the WHO's tireless efforts, they succeeded in eradicating smallpox in 1980 – the first disease to ever be eliminated through scientific application, international cooperation, and a cohesive agenda. During the COVID-19 pandemic, colleagues at the WHO have been at the forefront of outbreak response and preparedness activities. The WHO has continually provided early alerts to changing outbreak dynamics and maintained clear lines of communications with nations. WHO officials have developed and distributed timely documents with best practice infection prevention and control techniques to prevent COVID-19 infections. Additionally, they have shared information crucial to our understanding of SARS-CoV-2 and quell misinformation with clear answers and have created platforms for researchers in all domains to easily share data and collaborate on multinational/multicenter research protocols. Their expertise, born from science and practice, positions them as the leader to guide this pandemic response.

Political motives have no place in public health. Politicians have obligations to their constituents and should enact policies that protect societies. Withdrawing funds from the WHO will exacerbate the COVID-19 pandemic as government and healthcare officials are forced to make decisions based on inadequate or outdated information. It is imperative for the international community to fund WHO activities to curtail the COVID-19 pandemic and mitigate the development of other public health emergencies.

The COVID-19 pandemic is testing healthcare systems, public health professionals, and global resolve. We applaud the efforts of our colleagues at the WHO and know our collective experience with COVID-19 will inform future actions to prevent such pandemics.

**Conflict of interest**

PT reports being a member of the WHO COVID-19 IPC guidance development group of experts (COVID-19 IPC GDG) (unpaid position).

AH reports being a member of the WHO Health Emergencies Program (WHE) Experts Advisory Panel for Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Preparedness, Readiness and Response to COVID-19 (unpaid position); and a member of the WHO Scientific committee for IPC research in the context of the SARS-CoV-2 outbreak (unpaid position).

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