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MLA/AAHSL Call for Transparency and Impartiality in the Dissemination of Health Information

The Medical Library Association (MLA) and Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries (AAHSL) believe that access to information is critical to advancing science and promoting healthy people, and that knowledge is indispensable in making informed decisions in health care, education, and research.

As health sciences librarians who are MLA and AAHSL members, we recognize the crucial role played by the Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* (MMWR) and other sources of public health information. These publications provide high-quality, free-to-read information needed by clinicians, the public health workforce, and policymakers. This was true before the COVID-19 Pandemic when sources like MMWR published important research on topics such as tobacco use, immunizations, antibiotic-resistant bacteria, substance use, and maternal mortality. More than ever, it remains true in our current health environment.

As health sciences librarians, we navigate a complex ecosystem of health information: peer-reviewed journal articles, grey literature, including clinical trial registrations, clinical study reports, conference papers, and preprints. In this fast-changing information environment, preprints – preliminary versions of journal articles – have been important to advance research and clinical practice. The fact that researchers, clinicians, and librarians are critically appraising preprints (just as they critically appraise journal articles) and using them for research and health care shows that speedy dissemination of new information is critical to saving lives and to wisely allocating clinical and research resources.

As health sciences librarians, we believe that officials who have power over access to public health information are accountable to the taxpayers who fund the creation of these publications and reports. The goal of these reports is to further public health in America, not political agendas.

As health sciences librarians, we expect our government to be in alignment with the standards of scientific communication. These standards, of which transparency and impartiality are key principles, are the foundation of ensuring access to trustworthy health information, which is essential for improved health.

For all these reasons, the Medical Library Association and Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries reject all attempts to interfere with or delay the dissemination of scientific evidence. The health sciences library community stands ready to support efforts to increase transparency and impartiality in the dissemination of health information.

Organizational Bios

The Medical Library Association (MLA) is a nonprofit, educational organization with 3,500 health sciences information professional members worldwide. Founded in 1898, MLA provides lifelong educational opportunities, supports a knowledgebase of health information research, and works with a global network of partners to promote the importance of quality information for improved health to the health care community and the public.

The Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries (AAHSL) supports academic health sciences libraries and directors in advancing the patient care, research, education, and community service missions of academic health centers through visionary executive leadership and expertise in health information, scholarly communication, and knowledge management.