

Post Truth, Newspeak and Epidemiological Causality



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Commentary

During December 2017, arose a polemic about some news which showed as Trump administration has secretly banned some words for their use in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention official documents, the following ones: “diversity,” “fetus,” “transgender,” “vulnerable,” “entitlement,” “science-based” and “evidence-based”. It is obvious that there are strong bonds between cultural and political agenda and scientific progress, as well as that no all researches must be automatically allowed without control. Trump is an example (but not the first one, just remind George W. Bush religious ideas that banned most of stem cells research in the U.S.A., allowing the heading of this field to Sought Korea scientists [1], as he has already put in danger the future of several academic scientific fields [2-6]. If something has been demonstrated is that language occupies a fundamental space in Epidemiological debates: from causality to webs of causation, and, finally, to determinants [7-11]. Due to the social and complex nature of health determinants [12], it is very dangerous the political control over scientific terminology. This Orwellian scientific newspeak pushes epidemiological research to a dangerous swamp in which only those ‘good’ concepts can be used, undermining the informational richness which allows the existence of a grounded Epidemiology. The attack and unjustified control over scientific terms is a great mistake not only for political and democratic reasons (consider for example the recent electronic censorship war-as Julian Assange referred to- in Spain against Catalans right to decide peacefully about their future), but because is a direct attack to the heart of a ground and reliable scientific Epidemiology.

When words capture some aspects of reality and these same words could also explain and help to identify causal relationships, their censorship or political interference affects profoundly the scientific standards and puts all of us in danger. Time magazine has even told about “Trump Epidemiology of Hate” (November 22nd, 2016) and several voices has expressed great concern and worries about how his toxic budget and sanitary politics will deteriorate people’s health. As [13] reminds us, the best 2016 published epidemiological paper (according to The International Society for Environmental Epidemiology), Kaufman and coauthors’ Lancet Article “Association between air pollution and coronary artery

calcification within six metropolitan areas in the USA”: “Increased concentrations of PM2.5 and traffic-related air pollution...in ranges commonly encountered worldwide, are associated with progression in coronary calcification, consistent with acceleration of atherosclerosis. This study supports the case for global efforts of pollution reduction in prevention of cardiovascular diseases”. Then, climate change debates are not under politician’s responsibility but belong to all citizens of this planet. In a world in which we know that social determinants are the basis of health, attacks to the mechanisms that prevails us from sickness and death must be fought with all our energies. Words are not just words, are the key of reality. They cannot belong to flyer politicians, but to the whole society, which will decide how to use them.

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