

Chaos and Budget Cuts

A roundup of federal health headlines

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Somebody dial 911! Since President Donald Trump took office for his second term, his administration has defunded grants, implemented massive firings of federal employees and restructured or eliminated programs throughout the nation's umbrella health agency, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which includes the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the National Cancer Institute, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Countless clinical trials have been halted, public services disrupted and the collection of health data, such as new cancer diagnoses, imperiled. What's more, Elon Musk and his so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) gained access to the databases of federal agencies, which include information on private citizens, as they dismantle vital health programs under the guise of efficiency and savings.

Overseeing the chaos are the new Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., an anti-vaccine activist with no formal medical experience, and NIH director Jay Bhattacharya, MD, PhD. Trump has yet to name a new leader for the National Cancer Institute.

Next up: The White House's proposed "skinny budget" for fiscal year 2026 contains a 26% cut to HHS. The budget "will set this nation back dramatically in our ability to reduce death and suffering from [cancer]," says Lisa Lacasse, president of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network.

The American public does not seem to be signing off on Trump's vision. Protests have sprung up across the nation, such as the Death by 1,000 Musk Cuts march organized by the AIDS activist group ACT UP, whose protests in the 1980s and '90s led to lifesaving treatment and expanded access to health care.