

[Open Peer Review on Qeios](#)

[Commentary] Diverse Views and Robust Scientific Dialogue Are Essential to Advancing Science

Joe Murillo¹, Lindsay Andrews¹

¹ JUUL Labs

Funding: Author is a full-time employee of Juul Labs.

Potential competing interests: Author is a full-time employee of Juul Labs.

Abstract

In February 2022 the American Journal of Public Health (AJPH) published an [editorial](#) by Jodie Briggs and Dr. Donna Vallone, advocating for the censorship of industry-funded science. Juul Labs submitted the below letter in response to AJPH. AJPH informed us that “[t]he policy of the journal is to decline the publication of research that has been funded by the tobacco industry, not even as letters to the Editor.” Accordingly, we have shared our response directly with Ms. Briggs and Dr. Vallone and post it here to invite additional review and commentary from the scientific community.

I write on behalf of Juul Labs in response to [The Tobacco Industry’s Renewed Assault on Science](#). Diverse views and robust scientific dialogue are essential to advancing science. I am concerned, however, with the authors’ call to censor industry-sponsored scientific research, regardless of merit.

The authors’ editorial hinges on the allegation that “history has begun to repeat itself,” referring to actions of decades ago to impugn industry science today as inherently and irrevocably untrustworthy. Notably absent is acknowledgment of the 2009 passage of the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act (TCA) giving FDA jurisdiction over tobacco products. The TCA established the Premarket Tobacco Product Application (PMTA) process requiring that manufacturers of new tobacco products demonstrate *through science and evidence* that their products are “appropriate for the protection of the public health.” At Juul Labs, we executed an extensive research program designed to provide FDA with the information it needs to make this determination. Research transparency with FDA is foundational to this process and, as required by law, we submitted not only the findings and reports of the studies, but also the subject-level data, along with the underlying protocols, analysis plans, and statistical code. The authors’ claims that Juul Labs cited a press release in our PMTA submission is patently false. This is not history repeating itself. It is new history in the making. Tobacco and nicotine product manufacturers are now subject to exceptionally high standards of scientific rigor and transparency.

While FDA is ultimately responsible for assessing the scientific evidence about our products, scientists and the public health community have an important interest in understanding the evidence. Although PMTA submissions are confidential, Juul Labs has prioritized disseminating our research in [scientific venues](#) so that it may be subjected to peer review and contribute to cumulative knowledge. We have presented over 50 posters and published 24 manuscripts, including 12 in the [special issue](#) the authors reference. Every article has been subjected to the journals’ standard

procedures, including peer review and routine fees, and we believe the underlying science is strong. We also follow community standards for disclosure of interests, so that readers are aware of funding and authors' affiliation and may judge for themselves the merit of the findings.

We ask the authors to reconsider their anti-scientific censorial posture and embrace the change brought on by FDA oversight as an opportunity for open science in the interest of public health.

Jose Luis Murillo

Chief Regulatory Officer, Juul Labs