

# Populist radical right a threat to core values of medicine and public health

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The populist radical right is a threat to core values of medicine and public health, even within a functioning democratic system, according to a commentary published today by the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*. In his paper, political scientist Professor Scott Greer, who specialises in researching the politics of health policies of the European Union, attempts to explain what the rising tide of the right in Europe and the United States will mean for medicine and public health.

Greer, Associate Professor of Health Management and Policy at the University of Michigan School of Public Health, describes how in the UK the country's only important populist radical right party has substantially shaped the agenda of British politics, almost entirely through the adoption of UKIP positions by bigger mainstream parties.

Populism, he says, sits badly with the evidence-based style of [public health](#), citing comments made by Mike Pence, the new United States Vice President, who has endorsed 'gay conversion' therapy that purports to make patients heterosexual and has said that 'smoking doesn't kill'.

Greer says: "Populist radical right parties are not naturally inclined to collective financing of healthcare services or taking regulatory public health measures." Instead, he says, the effect of 'welfare chauvinism' on health access is likely to be exclusionary, reducing benefits for migrants or others whom they consider outside the people of their populism.

Since World War II, public health and medicine in many countries has

developed strong commitments to both human rights and vulnerable populations. Greer warns medical and public health professionals to be very careful about working with radical right parties and governments. "Any elective affinity between authoritarianism and public health would probably undermine our commitments to [human rights](#)", he says, and urges the medical and public health community to remain focused on promoting broadly egalitarian social policy, including the defence of health programmes.

**More information:** Medicine, public health and the populist radical right, *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, [doi.org/10.1177/0141076817712250](https://doi.org/10.1177/0141076817712250)

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