

NYC Health Dept. to rely on donations for research journals amid budget cuts

May 29 2024, by Evan Simko-Bednarski, New York Daily News



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

New York City's top health officials will have access to fewer than two dozen medical research journals, as the department has turned to outside funding for research articles following Adams administration budget

cuts.

City Health Commissioner Ashwin Vasana told staffers Tuesday that money from an independent nonprofit would be used to buy 23 one-year subscriptions to medical research journals, according to an internal memo obtained by the Daily News.

"With resources from the Fund for Public Health in New York, staff will have access to select public health journals for the coming year," Vasana wrote Tuesday. "We have selected these journals based on previous use by agency staff."

The list, shared with The News, includes well-respected publications like the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

The Fund for Public Health is dedicated to "connecting the NYC Health Department to private sector partners and the greater philanthropic community," according to its website.

As first reported by The News, Mayor Eric Adams' budget cuts gutted [public funding](#) for the Health Department's William Hallock Park Memorial Public Health Library last year.

The Long Island City, Queens, library had provided the department's epidemiologists, as well as the public, with access to peer-reviewed [medical journals](#), databases, books and other research materials for decades.

The library was shuttered in July 2023 as part of 4% citywide spending cuts. Many of the department's subscriptions ran until December 2023 and were not renewed.

Health Department staffers who had been with the agency during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic described easy access to a diverse group of journals as a crucial tool in the city's defense against the disease.

"This is going to make it much harder for people to get the information they need to do their job and protect New Yorkers," one staffer said at the time. "It's taking a tool out of the hands of the workers."

Spokesmen for the mayor and the Health Department told The News last year that city researchers could rely on alternative resources to continue their work.

A list of such resources—sent to departmental staff and shared with The News—included Google Scholar, the Public Library of Science and other free online databases to access research materials.

At the time, Health Department researchers called that insufficient.

Tuesday, about five months after the department's subscriptions expired, the commissioner acknowledged the importance of journal access, and said he was exploring options to further expand his staffers' options despite the lack of city funding.

"In addition to this one-year purchase, we are also exploring supplemental journal access through a collaboration with the city's [public health](#) schools," Vasan's memo continued.

"Once all details have been worked through, we will share further information," he added.

One Health Department staffer expressed approval Tuesday, telling The News that access to major journals seemed to be working.

But the nonprofit support will only partially restore journal access, and does not include access to interlibrary loans or searches of medical literature.

Public access to the library ended last July, and there are no plans to restore it.

"While we are pleased to be able to offer this access, at this time we are not able to fully restore services," the commissioner's memo continued.

"We will continue to explore additional ways to ensure access to the range of journals and services used by agency staff to carry out your critical day-to-day work," Vasani wrote.

2024 New York Daily News. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: NYC Health Dept. to rely on donations for research journals amid budget cuts (2024, May 29) retrieved 21 June 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-05-nyc-health-dept-donations-journals.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.