

When do good evidence and sound arguments fail?

By David H. Nguyen, Ph.D.

“ Those who oppress people don't care about evidence and arguments, but the oppressors will use such things to exploit people. Thus, the primary role of knowing good evidence and sound arguments isn't about changing the mind of the oppressor, but is about protecting yourself from oppressive tactics. ”

In my teaching of science to high school and college students, I emphasize the need to have good evidence and sound arguments. However, at some point I also need to teach them that ultimately not everyone cares about these things. Those who oppress people don't care about evidence and arguments, but the oppressors will use such things to exploit people. Thus, the primary role of knowing good evidence and sound arguments isn't about changing the mind of the oppressor, but is about protecting yourself from oppressive tactics. Oppressors who have already made up their minds won't be swayed by evidence and argumentation, but that doesn't mean that they won't be brought to justice or be disarmed by these tools.

People have the uncanny ability to deceive themselves, along with each other. This is why we say that people are "in denial" about their circumstances. As a human rights advocate, scientist, and science teacher, I know the importance of having good data and sound arguments in promoting the rights of exploited people. Good research papers can make a societal problem concrete, forcing opponents to face the facts – denial that the problem exists is a way of stalling progress. Good data can change policies and bring forth

much needed funding from governments or private sources. But good data isn't enough. As the saying goes, "Statistics don't lie, but liars use statistics." Therefore, good data needs the help of sound arguments that correctly apply the data and to counter the misuse of good data.

Consider the extremist group in Iraq and Syria known as ISIS. They enslave women and children for sex and labor. They sell human organs on the black market, carving the victims alive. Within the organ trade, ISIS does not work alone, but is part of a network of clinicians and smugglers. Do you think ISIS and its partners care about human rights and laws? They probably don't, but nonetheless it is the rule of law – during and after military intervention – that is needed to stop this oppression.

At *Cancer InCytes*, we invite experts to share their expertise so that other advocates and community leaders can learn useful things. This issue of the magazine contains articles from a number of "heavy hitters" who are experts in the area of the medical needs of trafficking victims. We are excited that the magazine is receiving recognition as an innovative approach that is needed regarding the spread of useful information to the public. I would like to point out the article by Dr. Barbara

Moynihan and Katie Olive, entitled "Unmasking Cancer as a Consequence of Human Trafficking: A Multidisciplinary Challenge." This article cites the recent research showing a link between childhood trauma and the risk for developing cancer in general – just as smoking is linked to lung cancer – and it does so in the context of the many other needs of trafficking victims.

We recently received recognition from the IRS as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Our application was approved just three weeks after submission, which may be one of the quickest approvals ever. We think that the IRS understands that society needs what *Cancer InCytes* is doing. We urge you to support *Cancer InCytes* by telling your friends about our exciting endeavors. Perhaps you would consider giving a small financial gift during this holiday season.

Sincerely,



David H. Nguyen, Ph.D.
Editor-in-Chief
Cancer InCytes Magazine

