

Join us for The Atlantic Festival in New York on September 18–20. Passes available now.

## HEALTH

# An Uproar at the NIH

Jay Bhattacharya, the the agency's director, has made a point of welcoming dissent. A letter from his officials will test that.

By Katherine J. Wu



Photo-illustration by The Atlantic. Sources: Chris Kleponis / CNP / Bloomberg / Getty; Grandbrothers / Getty.

JUNE 9, 2025

SHARE  SAVE 

*Updated at 10:26 a.m. on June 9, 2025*

Since winning President Donald Trump's nomination to serve as the director of the National Institutes of Health, Jay Bhattacharya—a health economist and prominent COVID contrarian who advocated for reopening society in the early months of the pandemic—has pledged himself to a culture of dissent. “Dissent is the very essence of science,” Bhattacharya said at his confirmation hearing in March. “I’ll foster a culture where NIH leadership will actively encourage different perspectives and create an

TO READ THIS STORY, [START A FREE TRIAL](#), OR [SUBSCRIBE TODAY](#).



KEEP READING *THE ATLANTIC*.

## Essential journalism for historic times

Subscribe for one year of  
access and a role in supporting  
independent journalism.

OR

Try 30 days free and see  
how *The Atlantic* fits into  
your life.

SUBSCRIBE

START FREE TRIAL

ALREADY HAVE AN ACCOUNT? [SIGN IN](#)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

---



Katherine J. Wu

 Follow

Katherine J. Wu is a staff writer at *The Atlantic*.

---

### Explore More Topics

[Donald Trump](#), [National Institutes Of Health](#), [United States Department Of Health And Human Services](#)

TO READ THIS STORY, [START A FREE TRIAL](#), OR [SUBSCRIBE TODAY](#).

