

## ASV Council Statement on evidence-based science and expert leadership

July 23, 2020

There is not a time in recent history that the world has not faced one microbial threat or another. In the recent past, viruses have taken center stage. A few of the most prominent include human immunodeficiency virus, West Nile virus, the first severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus, influenza virus, and Ebola virus. The threats posed by any of these viruses in the midst of those outbreaks seemed insurmountable as we were learning in real time. What hindsight clearly shows us is that we can outpace any virus when we let our virology, infectious-disease, and public-health experts lead the way unabated. It is vital that we address these threats with evidence-based science and expert leadership.

Over his 36 years at the helm of National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Anthony S. Fauci, MD has proven himself to be among America's most experienced infectious-disease experts. During the past few weeks, Dr. Fauci's scientific expertise has been challenged by some people with little training in infectious diseases. The elected Council of the American Society for Virology is compelled to voice our majority opinion that politicization of a public-health crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic can only worsen outcomes. We object to attempts to cast doubt on the science or to fuel mistrust in Dr. Fauci. We also provide our unequivocal endorsement of Dr. Fauci, and we implore the leaders of our nation to keep Dr. Fauci and scientists with comparable experience, who are driving a national response to COVID-19 that is based on evidence. Efforts to discredit or undermine scientific leaders place the health of every American at risk, compromise efforts to mitigate transmission, and thwart a return to normalcy.