

ADA Removes Five Scientists from Its Annual Conference – June 5, 2026

Controversy represents a publicity debacle for the ADA's showcase event

The American Diabetes Association has long wanted more publicity for its annual convention. It got that on Friday, but not the kind of publicity it was hoping for.

On the opening day of the conference, some of the ADA's most prominent scientists had their badges taken and were removed from the premises, and they were also threatened with arrest. Their offense? They were inside the convention center distributing an editorial in *Diabetes Care* that was sharply critical of the Trump administration – see [“Misguided Brushes of a Pen Continue to Dismantle and Destroy Biomedical Research in the United States: We Can No Longer Afford Complacency and Fear. We Must All Act Now!”](#)

Leading the effort to distribute the editorial was Dr. Steven Kahn, who was its lead author, is the Editor in Chief of *Diabetes Care*, and was last year's winner of the prestigious ADA [Banting Medal](#) (his [award lecture](#) on the loss of beta cell function and mass in T2D was very highly praised). Also distributing the editorial, among others, were three past presidents of the ADA, Drs. Jane Reusch, Elizabeth Seaquist and Desmond Schatz.

According to Dr. Kahn, ADA's leaders were tipped off that he and his scientific colleagues would be distributing the editorial before the keynote address, so security personnel were waiting for them – and part of the encounter was captured on video and narrated by whoever did the filming.

The clip shows Dr. Aaron Kelly, a white-bearded pediatric obesity expert from Minnesota, walking out with his hands up and then being pushed by a security officer. The clip also shows Dr. Kahn, holding a stack of editorials in one hand and a Starbucks coffee cup in the other, walking out the door. The clip quickly went viral.

“They physically grabbed us, forced us out of the conference center, and now they're telling us we can no longer attend this meeting,” the narrator says. “It's come to this in America. Censorship is real.”

In an interview, Dr. Kahn said the officer told him he was not allowed to distribute the editorial, and the officer took his badge and informed him that if he returned, he'd be arrested.

“I grew up in South Africa, and this was what South Africa was like under Apartheid,” he said.

In a statement, the ADA said in part: “Five registrants were removed from our Scientific Sessions for violating the conference code of conduct, which they agreed to during the registration process . . . These attendees were escorted out by our onsite event security because they demonstrated behavior not consistent with this code of conduct. They were respectfully given the opportunity to cease this behavior and chose not to, which is why they were escorted out.”

The incident is a debacle for the ADA – at a time when the focus should be on great achievements in diabetes research and care, it is now on the forcible removal of its most highly regarded members. It quickly became a national story, including in *The New York Times*.

What makes the incident so bizarre – something between the Keystone Cops and Kafka – is that *Diabetes Care* is the flagship publication of the ADA. So in New Orleans, the ADA appears to be trying to suppress its own editorial – even though the editorial is accessible to anyone, free of charge, on the *Diabetes Care* website.

But this wasn't a typical editorial.

Co-written with three distinguished colleagues (Drs. Cheryl Anderson, John Buse, and Elizabeth Selvin), the editorial criticized the Trump administration for hyping disproven theories about vaccines, presenting false information about diabetes, and slashing funding for biomedical research. But the editorial was unusual because the ADA tried to distance itself from it, as it prefaced the article by saying that “the opinions expressed in this editorial are the personal views of the authors” and do not represent those of the ADA.

It's obvious that politics, not science, is at the heart of this dispute.

At the conference, Dr. Kahn and others tried to distribute the editorial before the keynote speech, and that was no accident. It was to be given by NIH Director Jay Bhattacharya, though he was replaced by Dr. Richard Woychik, a senior advisor for the NIH's "Make America Healthy Again Strategy."

In response to the incident, Dr. David M. Nathan, one of the luminaries in the field whose career dates back to the DCCT, wrote an open letter to ADA titled "Shame on You."

"The attack on our scientific community is bad enough," he wrote, "but the seeming endorsement by the ADA of the current administration's approach to science and its attacks on freedom of speech is unconscionable."

Dr. Kahn said that the ADA is punishing him and his peers for speaking out because the ADA is afraid of the Trump administration – specifically, the ADA fears losing its nonprofit status – and this isn't unique to the ADA. "You can go to any major professional, nonprofit organization, and I haven't seen many of them speaking out," he said. "This is what the Trump administration wants. They don't want people speaking out, so everybody is scared of them because they are worried about their nonprofit status."

On Saturday, Dr. Kahn is due to give a talk at the conference, present a poster, and chair a session at which Congressman Troy Carter from Louisiana is due to speak. But as of late Friday afternoon, he was told that he would not be allowed back in.

-- by *James S. Hirsch and Kelly Close*