An accident victim is rushed to the hospital, bleeding and unconscious. The ER is primed and ready. A crack team of influencers leaps into action, having replaced the ER doctors….

OK, things haven't gotten quite that bad. But that's essentially what's happening to America's health system. The head of the Department of Health and Human Services is basically a crackpot, who thinks he can diagnose kids' biochemistry by walking past them in an airport. No, I'm not joking. Here's what he said:

> "I'm looking at kids as I walk through the airports today, as I walk down the street, and I see these kids that are just overburdened with mitochondrial challenges, with inflammation—you can tell from their faces, from their body movements, and from their lack of social connection. And I know that's not how our children are supposed to look."

Just in case you think he couldn't *really* have said anything that crazy, here's the C-Span video. It's only a half minute and well worth watching, if only to confirm he's serious.

It's hard to count the ways that this is nuts. There's no evidence of widespread mitochondrial disease among American kids. And also, no evidence that it would cause the problems that Kennedy mentions, or for that matter, that there's anything wrong with kids' faces or body movements in the first place. (And how would you tell, looking at kids in airports, whether kids are socially isolated? Their friends aren't with them!) On top of that, Kennedy has zero training in diagnosing anything at all, let alone the functioning of microscopic cell components.

If your crazy uncle said this, it might funny. But no, Kennedy isn't just another crackpot. He's the man running the government's public health, drug safety, medical research, and healthcare funding. He's going to be determining what vaccines we can use, what new drugs are approved, what Medicare will cover. But he doesn't have the faintest idea of any of these subjects. (Or more accurately, he knows a lot, but almost all of it is wrong.) And if you weren't already worried by all this, he's also the guy Stephen Miller, one of the most powerful men in the White House, called a "crown jewel of this administration."

And it's not like Kennedy is just a figurehead whose ranting we can disregard. He's

purging the government of anyone who actually believes in science. He axed the head of the Centers for Disease Control because she insisted that vaccine decisions should be based on actual data. She refused to commit in advance to backing the recommendations of Kennedy's handpicked committee of anti-vaxxers. Most of the top leadership within the agency has now fled. Let's hope there aren't any public health crises like avian flu on Trump's watch. The government's recommendation is likely to be something like inhaling bleach or taking cod liver oil.

Of course, what's happening to public health isn't unique. All across the government, Trump is at war with science, cancelling billions of dollars of biomedical, energy, and climate research, closing EPA's science department, replacing hard scientific evidence with climate denial as official dogma.

John Adams once said, "Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence." Replacing doctors and scientists with ideologues is a recipe for disaster, like flying a plane with your eyes closed.