

I am a practicing physician who opposes use of lethal tear gas under any circumstance. I take care of vulnerable adults and elderly with chronic conditions. Please see facts below for further information Supporting my stand.

Consider this a plea against use of Tear gas. Joining me are many physician colleagues who are backing me in this email.

Tear gas (a name for a collection of compounds designed to induce pain through severe irritant means, whether in the eyes, skin or lungs, often o-chlorobenzylidene aka "CS") has been studied by our own military. This showed that in military recruits, who are generally young and healthy, exposure to CS more than doubles the rate of pneumonia, bronchitis and viral illness following exposure. People die from each of these diseases every day. This suggests likely significant airway damage in healthy lungs, since this is data for young healthy military recruits in basic training. We know that those protesting for civil rights also include the elderly, children and medically vulnerable, therefore the rates of those affected and sickened will be higher. We certainly also have police officers serving who have chronic medical conditions including asthma and COPD. Indiscriminately firing tear gas into a crowd will have the risk of killing people, and it must be considered as an intervention with the potential for lethal effect.

In conjunction with the current circulating COVID19 pandemic, firing a substance that is going to force people to remove their masks, cough forcefully, and touch their eyes, etc, is certainly going to lead to worsened spread of the pandemic, even if those who are symptomatic stay home since we know there is asymptomatic carriage of COVID19. Pepper spray, like viruses, does not discriminate. It can affect protestors, bystanders and the police themselves. Every life is precious, and exacerbating a pandemic is not a responsible response to peaceful protest.

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