

Headline: Failing scientific research has potential solutions

Failing scientific research and data has become a crisis to more than half of scientists.

However, Richard Harris, NPR science correspondent and author, thinks it is not a crisis.

In order for something to be considered a crisis, it has to be newly found information, the inaccuracy of science has been happening for a long time, Harris said on Oct. 9, in a speech at the University.

“If you think of all the subtle ways things can go wrong, it’s pretty daunting,” Harris said.

According to Harris, this so-called crisis has some solutions, though.

“A lot of the problems we are talking about can be solved,” Harris said.

These problems he mentioned included using bad ingredients or cells in an experiment, biased lab designs, statistical errors and money.

Harris said that there are some cells, such as the HeLa cell, that just do not bring about accurate results. Some of these cells are listed so scientists know that they would not work, but a lot of the times that is looked over.

“It’s that kind of problem scientist don’t take the time to find out about,” he said.

If scientists were to pay attention to this, more accurate results will be found.

Other solutions Harris found included, better training in science, transparency in experiments and more financial aid.

Some scientists will bury their results on drugs or experiments that ended up failing. This is not beneficial because those results are just as important as successful tests, but no one will know about them if they are buried. Scientists cannot build off each other’s results, Harris said.

“If you have transparency in your data, you could correct things rapidly,” he said.

The financial issue is a large part of the problem, without money or funding, successful experiments cannot always be conducted or will cause an experiment to be unsuccessful.

But with all of these problems in science, Harris sees solution. There is a light at the end of the tunnel.

“Scientists need to find a light in what they’re doing,” Harris said.