Health Watch USA℠ Newsletter

https://www.healthwatchusa.org **Nov. 1, 2025**

Designated "Community Leader" for Value-Driven Healthcare
by the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services

Activity for the Month of Oct. Health Watch USA℠:

-- 1 Continuing Education Course.
-- 4 Commentaries/OpEds.
-- 1 Presentation Video
-- 2025 HW USA Conference Videos are Available.
-- 2024 HW USA Conference Videos are Available

Information Regarding Health Watch USA℠ Nov. 1st, 2023: Long COVID's Impact on Patients, Workers & Society: https://www.healthwatchusa.org/conference2023/index.html

Health Watch USA℠ 2023 Activities Report:
https://www.healthwatchusa.org/HWUSA-Officers/20231231-HWUSA-Report-2023.pdf

Health Watch USA℠ 2022 Activities Report:
https://www.healthwatchusa.org/HWUSA-Officers/20221231-HWUSA-Report-2022-2.pdf

Health Watch USA℠ 2021 Activities Report:
https://www.healthwatchusa.org/HWUSA-Officers/20211231-HWUSA-Report-2021.pdf

Health Watch USA℠ 2020 Activities Report:
https://www.healthwatchusa.org/HWUSA-Officers/20201231-HWUSA-Report-2020.pdf

Health Watch USA's 2025 Public Health Webinar

Aug 29, 2025, international webinar, including speakers from New Zealand, Australia & Singapore. An online continuing education course will soon be available from Southern Kentucky AHEC:
https://sokyahec.thinkific.com/collections

Download Brochure:
https://www.healthconference.org/healthconference.org-files/2025Conference_downloads/_20250829-HWUSA_Brochure-2.pdf

Presentations are currently available at https://healthconference.org

Health Watch USA℠ Newsletter Table of Contents

Back To Table of Contents

Health Watch USA^{sm} – Articles & Commentaries

CDC Hepatitis B vaccine recommendations ain't broke, so they don't need a 'fix'

"It makes little sense to use universal Hepatitis B (HBV) testing as a strategy to not vaccinate newborns with a safe and effective vaccine, when you are still recommending the child becomes vaccinated later." Unlike older children and adults, a newborn's immune system is immature, and they are highly susceptible to infections. More than 90% of infected infants will develop a chronic lifelong infection that kills 25% of patients. The default should be to administer the HBV vaccine to newborns. Along with testing, vaccination provides a second layer of protection. There may be cases where a physician feels he can safely grant a patient's wishes to delay newborn vaccination. The CDC recommends but does not mandate the vaccinations. But, by delaying vaccination you will have patient dropout, diminishing the chances of achieving widespread vaccination and eradication of this disease from our society." ***References*** Courier Journal. Oct. 22, 2025. https://www.courier-journal.com/story/opinion/contributors/2025/10/22/cdc-hepatitis-b-hbv-vaccine-kentucky-healthcare/86670970007/

Rand Paul COVID vaccine theories aren't helping to bridge public health divide | Opinion

The hyperpartisan assault on public health has to stop. If not, tens of thousands of lives and livelihoods will be lost. However, there appears to be no end in sight with discrediting vaccines and public health initiatives. The American Academy of Pediatrics has reported that approximately 234,000 children have been hospitalized in the United States with COVID-19. The FDA's Trump-appointed vaccine chief, Dr. Vinay Prasad, co-authored a paper which reviewed compelling data that showed, with the exception of the second dose of the Moderna Spikevax Vaccine, post-vaccine myocarditis in young males was less frequent than with infections. Unfortunately, until we cease this partisan bickering and realize there is plenty of misinformation to go around, we will not be able to confront and reverse this public health disaster. Having half of our society doing one thing and the other half another will not stop the spread of a pathogen. It is a setup for disaster. ***References*** Courier Journal. Oct. 15, 2025. https://www.courier-journal.com/story/opinion/contributors/2025/10/15/covid-vaccine-health-rand-paul-trump-biden/86570079007/

Back To Table of Contents

Beyond the Myocarditis Headlines: What the Data and Our Memory Say About COVID-19 Shots for Kids

Fear of vaccine-related myocarditis is narrowing guidance, but the evidence is clear: COVID-19 infection triggers more myocarditis than vaccination, early doses cut pediatric long COVID, and myocarditis appeared in 2020—before vaccines existed. The American College of Cardiology determined the rate of myocarditis for males between the ages of 12 and 24 years to be 1.07 per 10,000. In a meta-analysis published in JAMA Pediatrics, Watanabe and colleagues reported that, among children aged 5 to 11 years, the rate of postvaccine myocarditis was 1.8 per million (0.018 per 10,000). Vinay Prasad, MD, MPH, the FDA's vaccine chief, stated in a manuscript he coauthored, that with the exception of the second dose of Moderna's Spikevax vaccine, "The incidence of myocarditis found for young men after SARS-CoV-2 infection is larger than what we found for myocarditis following COVID-19 vaccination." ***References*** Infection Control Today. Oct. 9, 2025. https://www.infectioncontroltoday.com/view/beyond-myocarditis-headlines-data-our-memory-say-covid-19-shots-for-kids

2025 Commentaries Regarding Vaccines Published in the Courier Journal.

1. Hepatitis B Vaccine: CDC Hepatitis B vaccine recommendations ain't broke, so they don't need a 'fix' Oct. 22, 2025. https://www.courier-journal.com/story/opinion/contributors/2025/10/22/cdc-hepatitis-b-hbv-vaccine-kentucky-healthcare/86670970007/

2. COVID-19 Vaccine: Rand Paul COVID vaccine theories aren't helping to bridge public health divide. Oct. 15, 2025. https://www.courier-journal.com/story/opinion/contributors/2025/10/15/covid-vaccine-health-rand-paul-trump-biden/86570079007/

3. MMR, COVID-19 Vaccine: Trump's CDC is pushing deadly misinformation about autism, Tylenol and vaccines Sep. 25, 2025. https://www.courier-journal.com/story/opinion/contributors/2025/09/25/trump-cdc-tylenol-autism-vaccines-misinformation/86324793007/

4. Polio Vaccine: Myths about Amish anti-vaxxers won't Make America Healthy Again. July 10, 2025. https://www.courier-journal.com/story/opinion/contributors/2025/07/10/vaccine-polio-outbreak-amish-cdc-rfk-jr-autism/84505650007/

5. COVID-19 Vaccine: COVID isn't over. RFK Jr.'s vaccine recommendation is a terrible choice. June 2, 2025. https://www.courier-journal.com/story/opinion/contributors/2025/06/02/covid-vaccine-recommendation-rfk-jr-pregnant-women-healthy-children/83941480007/

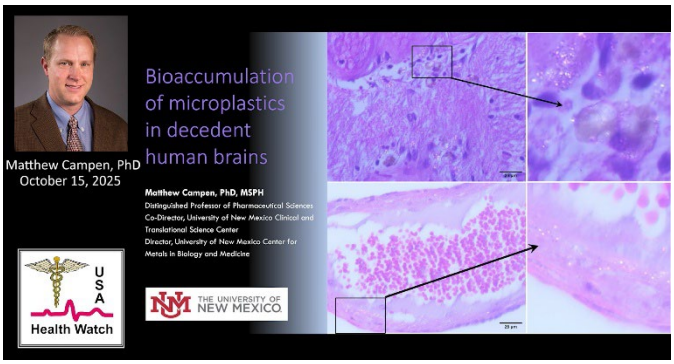
6. Measles Vaccine: We can't lose more children to measles. Get the facts about vaccines. May. 8, 2025. https://www.courier-journal.com/story/opinion/contributors/2025/05/08/trump-doge-cuts-measles-outbreak-misinformation-health/83327636007/

Back To Table of Contents

Beyond the Barnyard: How H5N1 Is Crossing Species—and Borders

The article “Beyond the Barnyard: How H5N1 Is Crossing Species—and Borders” outlines the resurgence and evolving threat of the H5N1 avian influenza virus. H5N1 has reemerged globally, causing mass bird deaths and spreading to mammals, including cows and cats. In Europe, countries like France and Belgium have initiated containment measures, while the U.S. has seen millions of poultry deaths and outbreaks in dairy cattle. There are over 200 mammalian species affected. Notably, dairy cows that are now showing susceptibility due to mutations resulting in viral clades B3.13 and D1.1, with transmission occurring via milk rather than respiration. Cats are also highly vulnerable, especially those consuming raw milk or infected birds, often developing fatal neurological symptoms. Human infections remain rare and mild, typically manifesting as conjunctivitis rather than respiratory illness. However, the virus is only a few mutations away from efficient human-to-human transmission. Control strategies include culling infected birds, improving biosecurity, and vaccination—though U.S. poultry vaccination is limited by trade restrictions. Experts stress the urgency of preparedness, as H5N1’s continued evolution poses a significant risk to animal and human health. ***References*** Infection Control Today. Oct. 31, 2025. https://www.infectioncontroltoday.com/view/beyond-barnyard-how-h5n1-is-crossing-species-borders

Health Watch USA^{sm} –Meeting Presentations



Bioaccumulation of Microplastics in Decedent Human Brains

Dr. Matthew Campen from the University of New Mexico presented recent research on the bioaccumulation of microplastics in human brains. His work, published in Nature Medicine, revealed that microplastics are present in various human tissues, with notably higher concentrations found in the brains of individuals with documented dementia. Campen’s team developed new methods using pyrolysis gas chromatography mass spectrometry to detect and quantify micro- and nanoplastics, overcoming previous technological limitations. Their findings show increasing levels of plastics in liver, kidney, and especially brain samples over time, with dementia cases exhibiting five to eight times higher concentrations. While the study establishes an association between microplastics and dementia, it does not prove causality—reduced blood-brain barrier integrity in dementia may contribute to increased plastic uptake. Controlled mouse studies demonstrated that orally administered microplastics can reach the

Back To Table of Contents

liver, kidney, and brain, with preliminary data suggesting genetic factors may influence susceptibility. Campen emphasized the need for further research, multidisciplinary collaboration, and improved detection methods, including cerebrospinal fluid analysis, to better understand the health impacts and environmental presence of nano- and microplastics. The research remains preliminary, with many questions about exposure, accumulation, and long-term effects. Health Watch USA^{sm} meeting Oct. 15, 2025. https://youtu.be/3dJQpEFA7bc

Health Watch USA^{sm} Meetings

-- Nov. 19, 2025. 7 PM ET. Speaker: Lisa Greenfield, Regional Program Manager (Midwest), Center for Green Schools at USGBC-Indoor Air and Environmental Quality Educator, Advocate and Influencer. Who will be discussing the importance of strategies to promote clean air in schools.

Space is limited. To attend future meetings, send an email to kavanagh.ent@gmail.com

Back To Table of Contents

Health Watch USA[sm] – Articles of Interest

SARS-CoV-2 infection heightens the risk of developing HPV-related carcinoma in situ and cancer

" After propensity score matching, both groups comprised 1,281,997 patients each. Over a 3-year follow-up period, individuals with SARS-CoV-2 infection had significantly higher risks of developing HPV-related cancers compared to those without infection: a 67% increase in cervical cancer, 131% in vaginal cancer, 98% in vulvar cancer, 92% in anal cancer, and 78% in oropharyngeal cancer."
https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/40813533/

Association of 2024–2025 Covid-19 Vaccine with Covid-19 Outcomes in U.S. Veterans

At 6 months of follow-up, the estimated vaccine effectiveness was 29.3% against Covid-19–associated emergency department visits, 39.2% against Covid-19–associated hospitalizations,and 64.0% against Covid-19–associated deaths. https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa2510226

Health-related quality of life of adult post COVID-19 condition patients three years after infection and patient characteristics associated with change over time: a longitudinal analysis from the CORFU study

Dutch researchers prospectively followed 158 patients with long COVID for 2 to 3 years. 30% worsened, 32% improved, and 37% stayed the same in quality of life.
https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11136-025-04090-y

The following article is from Switzerland. It is from a patient long COVID advocacy organization and points out concerns with rehabilitation and to make sure you are treated by a qualified and experienced center.

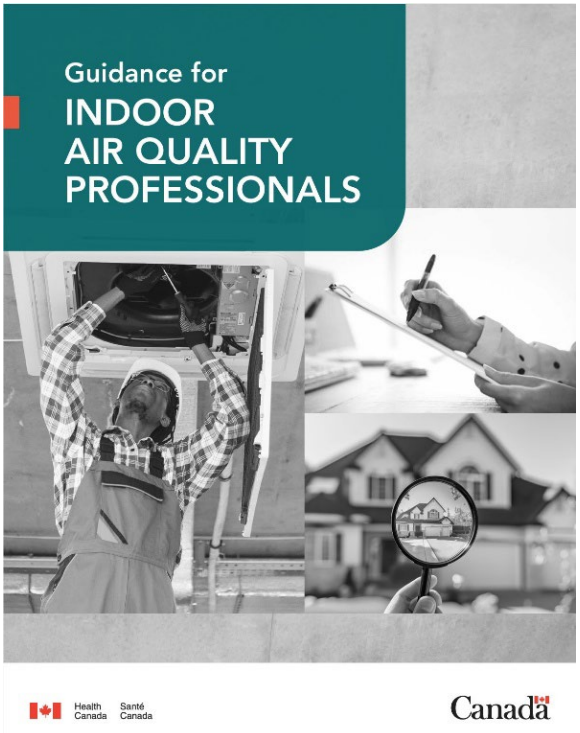
Wrong treatments in rehabilitation clinics

Rehab stays are harmful for many people with severe Long Covid and ME/CFS. This is shown by a recent survey. And: 39% of PAIS sufferers deteriorate irreversibly as a result of the assessment (survey by the patient organization). Shocking conclusion: Of over 800 respondents, half say that rehab has worsened their health. For 17 percent, it leads to an improvement, for 33 percent the state of health remains stable. "It is unacceptable that a therapy, which is often prescribed, leads to a deterioration in the health of 50 percent of those affected," says Manuela Bieri of the Long Covid Association.

Back To Table of Contents

https://www.srf.ch/sendungen/kassensturz-espresso/kassensturz/long-covid-und-me-cfs-falsche-behandlungen-in-reha-kliniken

Health Canada (Canadian Government) just affirmed that SARS-C0V-2 is airborne and recommended wearing N95 masks in indoor public spaces for the management of airborne pathogens.



Guidance for INDOOR AIR QUALITY PROFESSIONALS

3.4 DISEASES CAUSED BY BACTERIA, VIRUSES, AND FUNGI

However, with some viruses, such as SARS-CoV-2, transmission was also found to occur from particles remaining suspended in the air and travelling longer distances, hence the benefit of wearing masks, effective ventilation and building air filtration, and stand-alone air purifiers that utilize high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters when and where appropriate to reduce the risk of transmission. Ventilation can help reduce viral transmission in indoor spaces by preventing the accumulation of potentially infectious respiratory particles in the air. Good ventilation, combined with other personal protective measures, can further reduce the risk of infection.

Ventilation can help reduce viral transmission in indoor spaces by preventing the accumulation of potentially infectious respiratory particles in the air. Good ventilation, combined with other personal protective measures, can further reduce the risk of infection.

In addition to improving indoor ventilation, the following should be considered (PHAC 2021a, 2022, 2023a, 2023b, 2023c):

1. Encourage occupants to stay home and away from others if they are not feeling well.
2. Limit the amount of people in areas where ventilation is poor.
3. Have policies that require or strongly recommend people to wear a well-fitting N-95 or KN-95 respirator mask in indoor public settings.
4. Provide supplies for people to clean their hands often (e.g., soap and water, or alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol). Remind occupants to clean their hands after contact with shared surfaces and objects, and after coughing or sneezing.
5. Regularly clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces and objects.

› Develop and put into effect routine cleaning and disinfecting protocols that focus on shared surfaces, objects, and equipment.

› Use disinfectant products with a valid drug identification number and follow manufacturer's instructions for cleaning and disinfection.

https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/hc-sc/documents/services/publications/healthy-living/guidance-indoor-air-quality-professionals/guidance-indoor-air-quality-professionals.pdf

Back To Table of Contents

Somehow antivaxxers ignore the science and believe vaccines cause heart disease. While in rare occasions a vaccine can cause cardiac disease (myocarditis), the overall effect is to prevent heart disease due to a reduction in infections and complications after COVID-19. In addition, the research found that other viruses can also cause heart disease and COVID-19 can reactivate some of these viruses, such as those causing shingles.

Thus, if asked do vaccinations cause or prevent heart diseases, on average they overwhelming prevent heart disease.

Risk of heart attack and stroke rises after COVID-19 and flu infections

The research found: "People are three times more likely to have a heart attack or stroke in the first 14 weeks after having COVID-19 — and their risk remains heightened for up to a year, the study found. Also, people who had the flu were four times more likely to have a heart attack in the month afterward, and five times more likely to suffer a stroke"
https://www.phillyvoice.com/covid-flu-heart-attacks-stroke-vaccines/

Maybe COVID-19 Vaccines can prevent autism?

Covid in pregnancy tied to autism, developmental issues, study says

Washington Post: "A study published in the journal Obstetrics and Gynecology analyzed more than 18,100 births in Massachusetts of children born to women who contracted the virus starting in the early months of the pandemic through some of 2021. Children born to mothers infected with covid-19 during pregnancy faced a higher risk of autism, along with other neurological differences such as delays in speech and motor development, according to a study published Thursday." https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2025/10/30/covid-19-pregnancy-autism-risk/

Back To Table of Contents

Health Watch USA^{sm} – Webinar Presentations

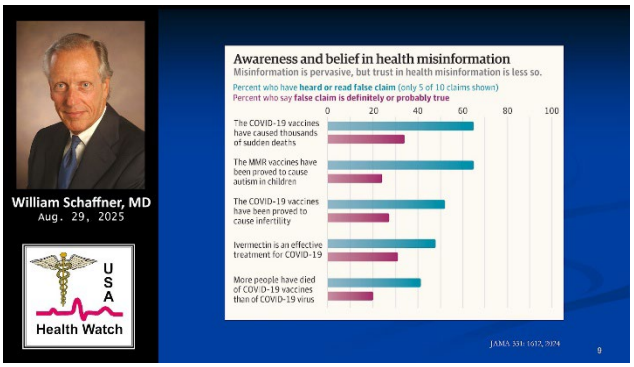
2025 Webinar Introduction & Science Behind Masking: Dr. Kevin Kavanagh, Board Chairman of Health Watch USA^{sm} gives the webinar introduction and discusses misinformation and disinformation regarding masking. Similar barriers found with adopting face masks can also be found with other public health strategies. Exposure dosage to an airborne pathogen is important in reducing the risks of transmission, which underscores the importance of masking and improving indoor air ventilation and quality. Health Watch USA^{sm} Webinar. Aug. 29, 2025. View Video View Slides

Associated Infection Control Today Article: How Misinformation Tries to Debunk the Science Behind Masking https://www.infectioncontroltoday.com/view/how-misinformation-tries-discredit-science-behind-masking

Key Points from Webinar Introduction

- The webinar marks the 20th anniversary of Healthwatch USA, focusing on infectious disease challenges and progress.
- Topics addressed include vaccinations, worker safety, elimination strategies, bird flu, phages as treatment for antibiotic resistance, and public health misinformation.
- Misinformation and disinformation have significant impacts on public health efforts, sometimes leading to violence and the enactment of ineffective policies.
- Recent CDC events include armed attacks, layoffs, leadership changes, & being asked to endorse controversial policies.
- Exposure dosage is important in reducing the risks of transmission. Which underscores the importance of masking and improving indoor air ventilation and quality.
- Masking as a public health strategy faces difficulties in compliance and study design, impacting trial results.
- Evidence suggests that mask effectiveness depends on correct and consistent use, type of mask, and exposure time.
- A layered approach—using multiple strategies simultaneously—is essential for effective infection control.
- Randomized controlled trials for masking are challenging due to ethical and practical considerations.
- Large studies and reviews show that masks, especially N95 respirators, reduce transmission of respiratory pathogens.
- Ivermectin trials have failed to show benefit in treating COVID-19, suggesting research should focus elsewhere.
- Improved air quality and ventilation should complement masking, particularly in healthcare settings.
- Short-term use of N95 masks for specific situations remains a recommended public health strategy.

Back To Table of Contents



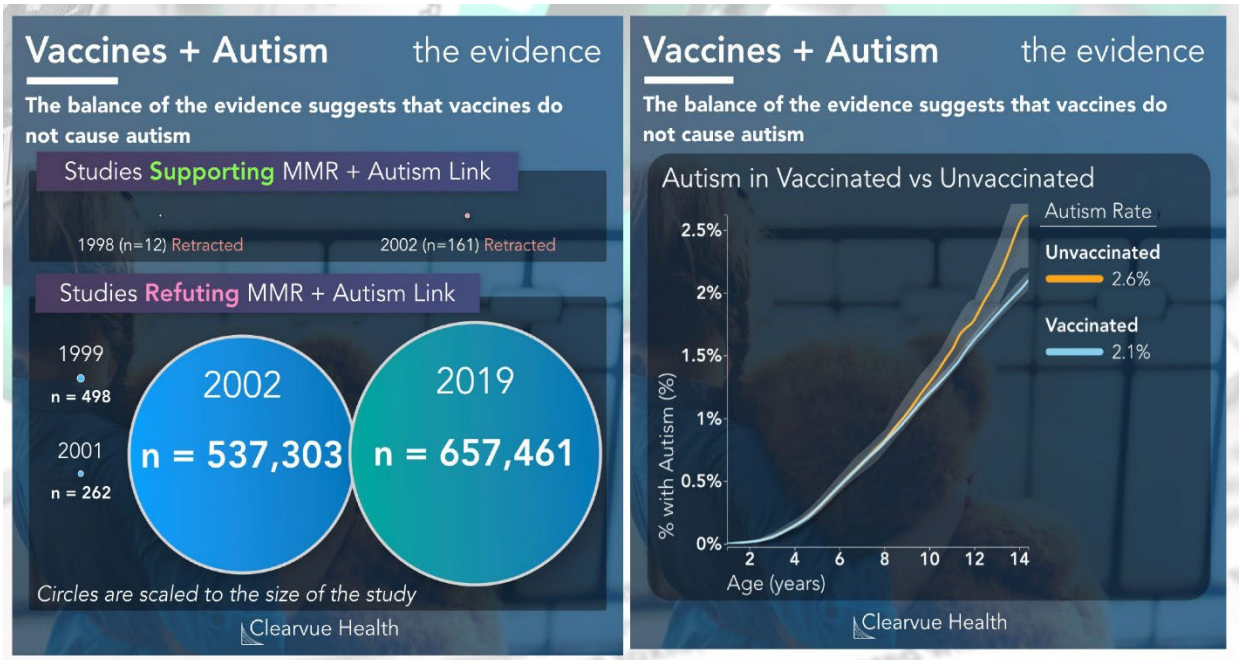
Communications and pandemic mitigation strategies—Health Watch USA 2025

William Schaffner, MD discusses that dealing with vaccine hesitancy, such as a patient's reluctance to receive a flu shot, requires more than simply offering facts—it necessitates empathy, validation, and a focus on building trust. When a patient expresses uncertainty about vaccination, the healthcare provider's response should never be surprise or judgment. Instead, it is vital to acknowledge and validate the patient's concerns, maintaining open, supportive dialogue. Asking patients to share their specific worries and responding with understanding helps ease anxiety and fosters a sense of partnership. Providers are encouraged to normalize healthy behaviors by sharing relatable examples, such as mentioning that they and their families are vaccinated, and highlighting that most people in the community do the same. This approach leverages social norms and comfort to promote positive health actions. Even if a patient remains hesitant, it's important not to argue, but to accept their reluctance and assure them the conversation will continue in the future. Effective communication about vaccines also involves keeping messages clear, fact-based, and accessible. Healthcare professionals should be honest about the benefits and limitations of vaccines, offering reassurance and emphasizing the goal of preventing serious disease. Ultimately, how patients feel during these interactions—respected, understood, and cared for—has a lasting impact. The role of the healthcare provider is not only to impart knowledge but to nourish trust, serving as both teacher and caregiver in the journey toward better health outcomes. Health Watch USA[sm] Webinar Aug. 29, 2025. View Presentation Video: https://youtu.be/h45wnmG79xI

Measles 50 years later

Wilmore Webley, PhD, Professor of Microbiology and Senior Vice Provost for Equity and Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Dr. Webley discusses the research and vaccine history of the measles virus, along with its severe clinical impact. He emphasizes that measles causes not only acute illness but also "immune amnesia," erasing immune memory and leaving survivors vulnerable to other diseases. Due to the virus's extreme contagiousness, a high rate of immunity in the community, greater than 95%, is necessary for herd immunity to take place and to stop the spread of the virus. As the presentation discusses, the benefit of the vaccine greatly outweighs its risks. Unfortunately, misinformation is rampant, and immunization rates are falling. In many areas they are well below the level needed to achieve herd immunity. Much of the misinformation can be traced back to a deeply flawed 1998 study by Andrew Wakefield which was published in the Lancet and later retracted by the Journal. The study was not controlled, suboptimally conducted, and involved only 12-patients.(1) Numerous large studies have not found a relationship between vaccines and autism. In one study, unvaccinated individuals were even found to have a statistically non-significant higher rate.(2,3) It is ironic that hundreds of thousands of patients have been studied to counter the initial 12-patient report. Research dollars could have been spent elsewhere, such as researching other causes of autism. Health Watch USA[sm] conference, Aug. 29, 2025. View Video of Presentation: https://youtu.be/AOgySUPnGKk

Back To Table of Contents



https://www.clearvuehealth.com/b/autism-mmr-stats/

(1) Godlee F, Smith J, Marcovitch H. Wakefield's article linking MMR vaccine and autism was fraudulent. BMJ. 2011 Jan 5;342:c7452. doi: 10.1136/bmj.c7452. PMID: 21209060. https://www.bmj.com/content/342/bmj.c7452.lon g

(2) Hviid A, Hansen JV, Frisch M, Melbye M. Measles, Mumps, Rubella Vaccination and Autism: A Nationwide Cohort Study. Ann Intern Med. 2019 Apr 16;170(8):513-520. doi: 10.7326/M18-2101. Epub 2019 Mar 5. PMID: 30831578. https://www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M18-2101

(3) Data on the MMR Vaccine & Autism | Visualized Health. Mar. 7, 2019. https://www.clearvuehealth.com/b/autism-mmr-stats/

A View from the Frontlines: The Current State of Infection Control in U.S. Healthcare Facilities

Lisa Baum MA, a lead representative for the New York State Nurses Association, highlighted persistent issues in infection control within healthcare facilities, emphasizing the spread of nosocomial infections including airborne infectious diseases. Despite improvements, infection rates and associated deaths remain high, exacerbated by underreporting and insufficient data—particularly for airborne diseases. Critical contributing factors include understaffing, rapid room turnovers, inadequate cleaning, inadequate ventilation and lack of training on effective use of disinfectants, such as proper dwell time for pathogen elimination. Environmental services staff shortages and overcrowding in emergency departments further increase transmission risks, with patients sometimes placed in hallways or separated only by curtains. Ventilation is a recurring concern. While negative pressure rooms and advanced local exhaust systems exist; they are not widely implemented. There are inadequate regulation and the regulations that do exist are not adequately enforced.

Back To Table of Contents

Personal protective equipment (PPE), though essential, is not the most effective control in the hierarchy, often hampered by supply chain challenges and improper fit. The pandemic revealed deeper systemic flaws, with crisis measures sometimes prioritizing operational needs over safety.
Lisa Baum advocates for layered controls: improved identification and isolation protocols, robust testing, enhanced staffing, better ventilation, and a shift to reusable PPE. She stresses the necessity of regulatory reforms to ensure consistent and effective infection prevention and supports empowering organizations like NIOSH to restore scientific leadership in occupational health. View Presentation Video: https://youtu.be/1Aa5AhHU0JA

Bacterial Phages, a New and Old Treatment for Antibiotic Resistant Bacteria

Ambassador Deborah Birx, MD, discusses bacteriophages and their potential for treating patients with life-threatening antibiotic-resistant infections.

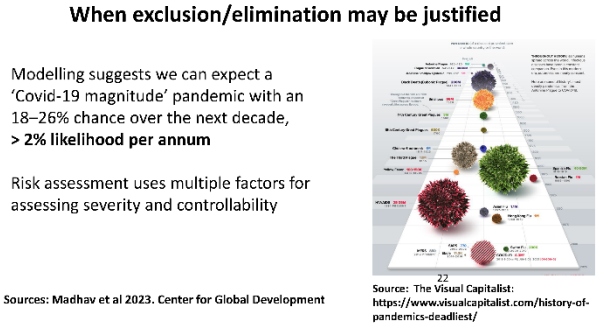
Bacteriophages, viruses that infect specific bacteria, offer a promising alternative for treating infections caused by antibiotic-resistant bacteria such as Staphylococcus aureus and Pseudomonas aeruginosa. Unlike broad-spectrum antibiotics, phages are highly selective, targeting only their host bacteria without disrupting the beneficial gut microbiome. Interest in phage therapy is rising as antimicrobial resistance escalates, but regulatory approval is still pending in countries like the United States due to the challenges of manufacturing, purifying, and validating these biologics.

Clinical development has been slow because producing stable, pure phage preparations requires them to be grown on their host bacteria and thoroughly purified to avoid immune reactions. Most phage treatments in the United States have been used compassionately in critically ill patients, but rigorous placebo-controlled trials are essential for regulatory FDA approval.

Recent trials have investigated phage therapy for difficult cases of bacteremia and pneumonia, often in combination with antibiotics. Results show that phage therapy can reduce relapse rates, shorten hospital stays, and minimize adverse reactions. In a recent trial on patients with severe MRSA infections, including those with endocarditis. The response was 100 percent with the addition of phage without any relapse at one week post stopping antibiotics, as compared to a 25 percent relapse rate in the placebo arm.

The field now aims to prove efficacy through large phase three superiority trials, which could establish phages as a viable standard of care. Ultimately, phage therapy has the potential not only to treat resistant infections but also to lessen antibiotic use, preserve the microbiome, and improve outcomes in patients with serious bacterial diseases. Health Watch USA^{sm} webinar Aug. 29, 2025. View Presentation Video: https://youtu.be/CQmpXcIiJg8

Back To Table of Contents

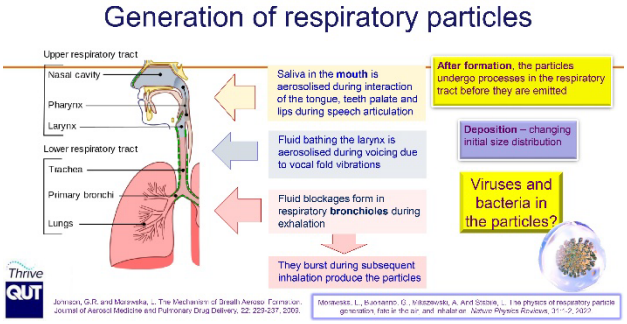


Why elimination should be the default strategy for future severe pandemics

In this presentation, Professor Michael Baker, a key figure in New Zealand's COVID-19 response, discusses the country's elimination strategy against the pandemic. A public health physician and epidemiologist at the University of Otago, Baker highlights that a clear strategy is crucial for effective pandemic management. He emphasizes three primary response strategies: mitigation, suppression, and elimination. In March 2020, New Zealand adopted an elimination approach characterized by rapid border closures and stringent public health measures to stamp out infections despite having only 100 reported cases at the time.

Baker details how elimination allowed New Zealand to maintain near zero transmission of COVID-19 for almost two years, thereby affording time to enhance vaccination efforts and improve healthcare responses before widespread infection. This strategy resulted in low cumulative mortality compared to other nations, which generally employed less coordinated approaches. He notes that the elimination strategy bought time to manage healthcare and maintain community functions, leading to fewer restrictions and economic impacts compared to countries that faced uncontrolled outbreaks.

However, he acknowledges challenges such as public compliance, equity concerns, and the logistics of implementing border controls. As new variants emerged, New Zealand transitioned from elimination to suppression and now operates under a mitigation strategy. Baker concludes that successful pandemic responses rely on evidence-informed strategies and political leadership, advocating for global coordination in health responses and preparedness for future pandemics. In discussion, he notes negative excess mortality in New Zealand during the pandemic, highlighting the role of infectious disease management in reducing overall mortality. Aug. 29, 2025. Health Watch USA[sm] Webinar: Combating Infectious Disease Challenges. View Video: https://youtu.be/I7DIJA87sI8



Understanding and Reducing the Spread of Respiratory Pathogens Through The Air

Dr. Lidia Morawska, PhD, an expert in air quality, discussed the science behind infectious respiratory particles, emphasizing the importance of understanding their generation and spread. All respiratory activities, especially louder ones like singing, produce particles that can remain suspended in the air for extended periods, increasing the risk of transmission of viruses such as SARS-CoV-2. Smaller particles, originating deeper in the respiratory tract, tend to carry higher viral loads.

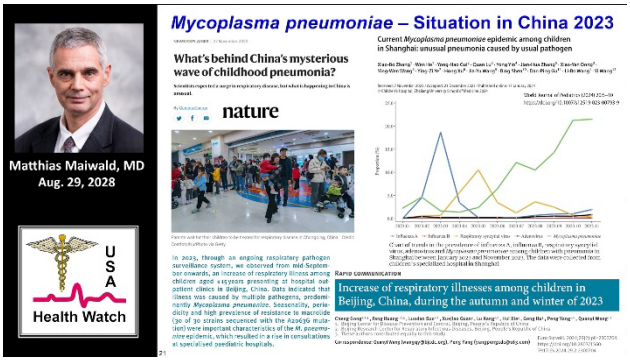
Dr. Morawska highlighted historical resistance to recognizing airborne transmission, noting that scientific consensus and interdisciplinary collaboration were essential in shifting global perspectives, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. She cited the need for robust ventilation far beyond merely opening windows, as mechanical ventilation systems significantly reduce infection rates. A study in Italy demonstrated lower COVID-19 cases in classrooms equipped with mechanical ventilation compared to those without.

Back To Table of Contents

The presentation underscored the necessity for better building designs focused on indoor air quality and continuous monitoring of ventilation performance. Dr. Morawska advocated for indoor air quality regulations akin to outdoor standards, pointing out that voluntary measures often fall short, especially in schools. Low-cost CO2 sensors offer practical means for individuals and institutions to assess air quality and mitigate risks. Ultimately, Dr. Morawska called for clean indoor air as a public health norm, suggesting that improved air quality regulation would yield benefits comparable to other historical advances in sanitation, with far less investment required. Health Watch USA[sm] webinar. Aug. 29, 2025. View Presentation Video: https://youtu.be/MpDChemSBD8

More about Dr. Morawska: https://time.com/collection/100-most-influential-people-2021/6095975/lidia-morawska/

Portable CO2 Monitors: Dr. Lidia Morawska, PhD, explains the usefulness of carrying a portable CO2 monitor when one enters public spaces. (CO2 is a surrogate for clean air. Lower levels are better.) One can use the monitor to determine the safety of indoor air and to help you in deciding whether or not to wear a mask (N95 Respirator). Q & A period moderated by Noel Eldridge, MS, at Health Watch USA[sm]'s 2025 Conference. View Video: https://youtu.be/bmg_G2tEOKU



Unusual re-emergence of respiratory pathogens after lifting of COVID-19 restrictions in Singapore

Dr. Matthias Maiwald presented an in-depth analysis of the trends in respiratory pathogens in Singapore following the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions. Using data from 120,000 clinical samples (mainly pediatric) collected between 2019 and mid-2025, he outlined how pandemic containment measures initially caused a dramatic decrease in common respiratory viruses and bacteria, such as influenza, RSV, and Mycoplasma pneumoniae.

As restrictions were gradually eased, certain non-enveloped viruses like enterovirus/rhinovirus and adenovirus reappeared first, likely due to their environmental stability at phases of increased social contact. Other pathogens returned in unusual patterns—RSV and influenza A exhibited out-of-season peaks, and Mycoplasma pneumoniae resurged after a long absence, concurrent with significant outbreaks in China. The outbreaks in China had notably high rates of macrolide resistance. Some pathogens, such as pertussis, remained nearly absent throughout the observation period.

Dr. Maiwald discussed several hypotheses for these patterns, including immunity debt (reduced exposure leading to greater vulnerability), innate immune system changes, and immune dysregulation after Covid-19 infection. He emphasized that the overall burden of respiratory infections in 2025 is approaching pre-pandemic levels but may still be slightly elevated. The reemergence of pathogens was

Back To Table of Contents

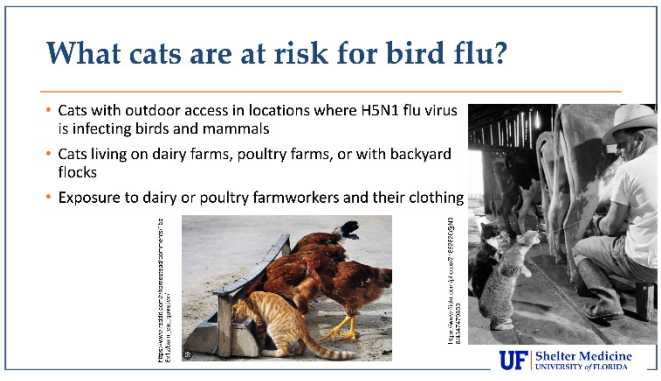
quite uneven, with some surging above historical norms and affecting different age groups or presenting more severe cases. Health Watch USA[sm] webinar on Aug. 29, 2025. View Presentation Video: https://youtu.be/jRwadwS31T0

Bird Flu, the risks and prevention of a future pandemic

Dr. Richard Webby, a virologist at St. Jude's and a leading expert on influenza, presented an overview of the current landscape of H5N1 avian influenza ("bird flu") and its potential threats to human health. He explains that influenza viruses, especially those in wild migratory birds, are highly diverse. Most remain in their natural hosts, but occasionally spillover events infect other animals, including poultry, swine, and sporadically humans—though sustained human-to-human transmission has not been observed.

Dr. Webby highlights how certain influenza subtypes, like H5N1, have caused concern for decades. The virus first infected humans in Hong Kong in 1997, leading to fatalities but was contained by culling poultry. Since then, H5N1 spread globally through wild birds, leading to outbreaks in domestic animals and, more recently, a significant incursion into the Americas. In 2024, the virus unexpectedly infected US dairy cattle, a species not previously considered at risk, with human cases mostly limited to conjunctivitis in exposed workers. Despite this, the virus hasn't shown key mutations needed for efficient human spread.

Control strategies focus on surveillance, culling in poultry, movement controls in cattle, and, in some countries, vaccination of animals. Human vaccines exist but are rarely deployed. Dr. Webby emphasizes that the economic consequences, particularly for the poultry industry, have been severe, with billions lost, and stresses the importance of ongoing vigilance to prevent a future pandemic. Health Watch USA[sm] webinar Aug. 29, 2025. View Video: https://youtu.be/GykR462luJQ



Chickens, Cows, and Cats: A Barnyard Story about Bird Flu -

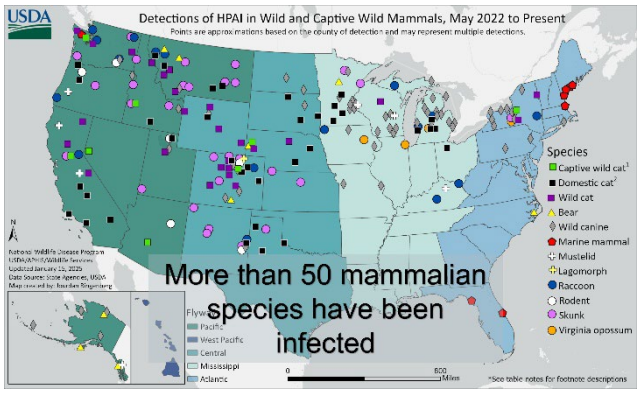
Dr. Cynda Crawford, DMV, PhD discusses H5N1 or "Bird Flu" and its impact on domestic cats, poultry and dairy cattle at the 2025 Health Watch USA[sm] webinar: "Combating Infectious Disease Challenges."

Presentation Summary: The presentation by Dr. Cynda Crawford explores the evolving ecology and impact of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza (bird flu) across the United States. Traditionally, wild waterfowl are the natural hosts of influenza A viruses, but in recent years, the H5N1 subtype has spread extensively, affecting all 50 U.S. states' poultry, leading to the infection and depopulation of approximately 175 million birds.

Back To Table of Contents

Since 2022, H5N1 has spilled over from wild birds into commercial and backyard poultry, then into a wide range of mammals—over 200 terrestrial and marine species, including seals, sea lions, and for the first time, dairy cattle. Dairy cows experience H5N1 as a localized mammary gland infection resulting in mastitis and sudden drops in milk production, with high viral loads detected in milk but generally nonfatal outcomes for the animals. New genotypes have been identified, highlighting frequent viral reassortment.

A notable event occurred in March 2024 when barn cats on a Texas dairy farm died rapidly after consuming raw milk from infected cows, marking the first documented mammal-to-mammal transmission of H5N1 via milk. Cats suffer severe, often fatal neurological disease, and the mortality rate among infected cats is estimated at 50–70%. There is no current evidence of cat-to-cat or cat-to-human transmission. The situation raises public health concerns about cows and cats as potential "mixing vessels" for new, more dangerous H5N1 strains, emphasizing the need for enhanced surveillance, biosecurity, and consideration of vaccines for at-risk animals. Health Watch USA[sm] webinar. Aug. 29, 2025. View Presentation Video: https://youtu.be/drvk7vSj6LE



Following H5 Influenza As It Moves Through North American Food Animals

Dr. Carol Cardona discussed the evolution and spread of H5 influenza, focusing on its movement through North American food animals. She noted the initial incursion of goose Guangdong H5 in 2014, leading to widespread outbreaks in commercial poultry, which were controlled through mass depopulation. The virus returned in 2021, this time driven by wild waterfowl as primary reservoirs, with poultry now mostly victims rather than sources of transmission.

Cardona highlighted that stamping out poultry, while effective in halting farm-to-farm spread, does not control the virus in wild birds. Over 170 million birds have been depopulated due to outbreaks, including 150 million from wild bird infections and another 20 million related to bovine infections. H5 has expanded into more than 50 mammalian species and continues to adapt to new hosts, including cattle, goats, alpacas, and bears.

Control options for H5 include stamping out, vaccination (which faces economic and export barriers), and biosecurity, though each has limitations due to the virus's evolving host range. Cardona stressed the lack of surveillance in wild mammals and called for improved prevention strategies. She addressed misconceptions about asymptomatic carriers and pointed to genetic resistance in some animals, although no mechanism is known in chickens. The presentation concluded by emphasizing the unpredictable nature of influenza and the need for adaptable control measures. Health Watch USA [sm] Webinar Aug. 29, 2025. View Presentation Video: https://youtu.be/SALHVe_aAJ4

Back To Table of Contents

Active Continuing Education Courses

COVID-19: Endemic Impact & Responsibility

Four credit hours for Physicians - Category I AMA Credits and four hours of corresponding Kentucky Board Accreditation, Physical Therapy, Respiratory, EMS, & Nursing (4.8 hrs.)

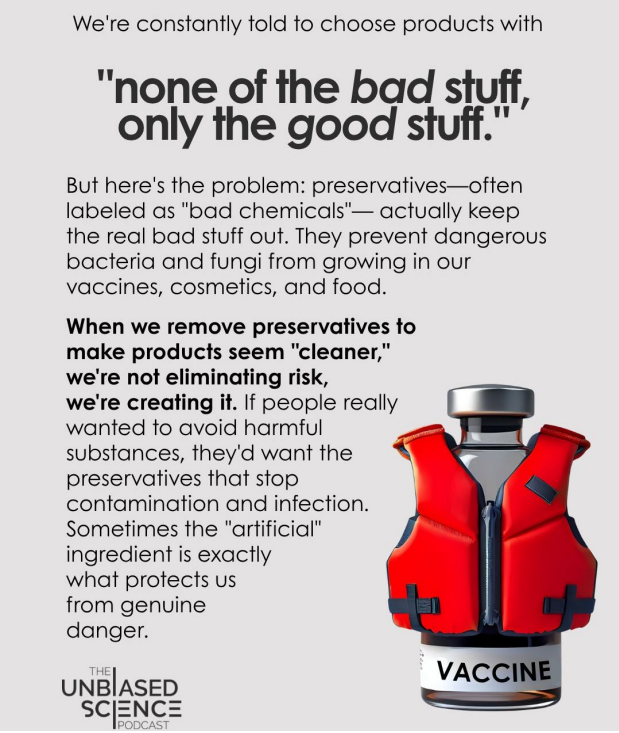
Course Objectives:

- To better diagnose and recognize the multiple presentations of Long COVID, including behavioral health implications.
- To be able discuss with patients the importance of preventing COVID-19 and other respiratory diseases.
- To combat patient misinformation regarding vaccines and the risks of COVID and Long COVID.
- To identify and reschedule patients who missed disease screenings during the pandemic.
- To discuss how COVID-19 is spread through the air by a continuum of particle sizes.
- To discuss with office staff and other health care professionals strategies to prevent the spread of respiratory pathogens including use of N95 masks and improvement in indoor ventilation.
- To better discuss with patients the benefits and need for vaccinations.

Link to Course (Southern Kentucky AHEC)
https://sokyahec.thinkific.com/courses/COVID-enduring

Download Brochure: https://www.healthconference.org/healthconference.org-files/2024Conference_downloads/20240901-HWUSA_Brochure-AHEC.pdf

Back To Table of Contents



Health Watch USA℠ – Combating Misinformation

We have posted a number of COVID-19 resources regarding common areas of misinformation. These include:

• The Dangers of Long COVID and COVID-19 in Children: Download Resource

• COVID-19 Vaccine Prevention of Long COVID: Download Resource

• COVID-19 Vaccine's Effectiveness & Risks: Download Resource

• The ineffectiveness of Hydroxychloroquine & Ivermectin in the treatment of COVID-19: Download Resource

Health Watch USA Op-eds Regarding COVID-19 & Children

• COVID is still a problem, and we need to do more to stop it | Opinion. Lexington Herald Leader. Nov. 1, 2024. https://www.kentucky.com/opinion/op-ed/article294875999.html#storylink=cpy

• COVID is closing Kentucky schools – again. Embracing disinformation paralyzes our response. Sept. 6, 2023. USA Today. https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2023/09/06/kentuckyschool-districts-close-covid-upgrade-buildings-ventilation/70765140007/

• 70% of COVID-19 Cases Transmitted By Children. Infection Control Today. June 5, 2023. https://www.infectioncontroltoday.com/view/70-covid-19-cases-transmitted-by-children

Health Watch USA℠ – 2023 & 2024 Conference Presentations

COVID-19: Endemic Impact & Responsibility

Link to 2024 Presentation Videos:
COVID-19: Endemic Impact & Responsibility Sept. 1, 2024

Link to 2023 Presentation Videos:
Long COVID's Impact on Patients, Workers & Society

Download & View 2023 Conference Proceedings: Kavanagh KT, Cormier LE, Pontus C, Bergman A,

Webley W. Long COVID's Impact on Patients, Workers & Society. Medicine. Published Mar. 22, 2024. https://journals.lww.com/md-journal/fulltext/2024/03220/long_covid_s_impact_on_patients,_workers,__.50.aspx

Download 2023 Brochure: https://www.healthwatchusa.org/conference2023/healthconference.org-files/2023Conference_downloads/20231101-HWUSA_Brochure-5.pdf

==========

To subscribe or unsubscribe to Health Watch USA[sm]

Send an email to kavanagh.ent@gmail.com

Visit and "Like" Health Watch USA[sm] Facebook Page at:

https://www.facebook.com/HealthWatchUsa