



Health Watch USAsm Newsletter

<https://www.healthwatchusa.org> Dec. 1, 2025

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

Activity for the Month of Nov. Health Watch USAsm:

- 1 Continuing Education Course.
- 2 News Articles
- 1 Presentation Video
- 2025 HW USA [Conference Videos are Available.](#)
- 2024 HW USA [Conference Videos are Available](#)

Health Watch USAsm Nov. 1st, 2023 Conference Presentation Videos & Proceedings: Long COVID's Impact on Patients, Workers & Society: <https://www.healthwatchusa.org/conference2023/index.html>

Health Watch USAsm Activities Reports: [2020](#) [2021](#) [2022](#) [2023](#) [2024](#)

COMBATING INFECTIOUS DISEASE CHALLENGES **Have we gone twenty steps forward or backwards?**

Health Watch USA's 2025 Public Health Continuing Medical Education

International speakers from New Zealand, Australia & Singapore.
Course Objectives:

1. Discuss the dangers imposed by four infectious pathogens, SARS-CoV, measles, H5N1, and antibiotic-resistant bacteria.
2. Identify preventative strategies to prevent the spread of airborne pathogens.
3. To better educate patients regarding misinformation surrounding vaccinations, in order to reduce patient infections and promote public safety.
4. Identify the role of bacteriophages in treating antibiotic resistant bacteria.



The course is currently available at <https://healthconference.org> and [Combating Infectious Disease Course - Health Watch USA](#)

This activity has been planned and implemented in accordance with the accreditation requirements and policies of the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) through the Joint Providership of the Kentucky Medical Association and Healthwatch USA. The Kentucky Medical Association is accredited by the ACCME to provide continuing medical education for physicians. The Kentucky Medical Association designates this enduring material activity for 4.5 AMA PRA Category 1 credits.[™] Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.



Health Watch USAsm Newsletter

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Health Watch USAsm – Articles & Commentaries



There are a lot of 'best' Arizona hospital rankings. Which ones should you trust?

Dr. Kevin Kavanagh, who is chair of the board for the patient advocacy and research integrity organization Health Watch USA, said he'd like to see more rankings that look at hospital performance over time. He thinks that all the ranking systems have merit, and also that they are all different. He likes the emphasis the federal ratings and Leapfrog place on patient experience and recommends looking at the methodology and using them as a guide. "These are relative percentile rankings, they are not necessarily meaning that you get bad care," he said. "It's just that it might be possible to

get better care somewhere else."

In many areas of the country, the public doesn't have a choice of hospitals, he noted.

"Even in large places like Phoenix, you have restrictions by your insurer, distance. If you have an emergency the ambulance will take you to the nearest facility," he said. "So the rankings are also important to look at and pressure hospitals to do better, so that when you are sick you obtain the highest level of care possible."

Here are some tips for choosing care from Kavanagh and other patient safety experts:

1. It's best to research hospitals before you get sick.
2. Bring a family member or another advocate with you to the hospital.
3. Consider all hospital rankings rather than just one.
4. Check state data on hospitals.
5. Talk to health care providers about hospital rankings and where to get care.

<https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/arizona-health/2025/08/25/best-hospital-ratings-should-focus-more-on-patient-safety/85766796007/>



What new CDC message on vaccines and autism means for Arizona health

Dr. Kevin Kavanagh, a national patient safety advocate and executive director of Health Watch USA, says misinformation about vaccines and autism goes back to a long-ago debunked study published in the respected medical journal The Lancet in 1998 that implied a link between autism

and the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine (MMR). Former British surgeon Andrew Wakefield's study was later discredited and retracted, but doubts about the MMR vaccine

have persisted ever since. The study involved only 12 children, and in some of the kids, symptoms began prior to vaccination, said Kavanagh, who is an associate editor for The Journal of Public Safety. "It's just unbelievable," Kavanagh said of the new CDC messaging. "It's pseudoscience taken to a whole new level, where it's being given credibility. It's going to affect and possibly cost the lives of tens of thousands of people, possibly even more." Kavanagh, added that multiple research studies have since been undertaken in order to debunk the unsound science of Wakefield's study. AZ Central:

<https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/politics/arizona/2025/11/20/rfk-jr-cdc-spreads-false-facts-about-vaccines-autism/87375565007/>

Health Watch USAsm –Meeting Presentations

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Why Indoor Air Quality Matters in Schools



PROTECTING THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF STUDENTS AND STAFF

Indoor Air Quality In Our Schools

Lisa Greenfield, CAFS, from the Center for Green Schools at the U.S. Green Building Council presents "Indoor Air Quality In Our Schools." Health Watch USA Meeting, Nov. 19, 2025. <https://youtu.be/fclJhMi1Raw>

Download PDF of PowerPoint Slides:

<https://www.healthwatchusa.org/HWUSA-Presentations-Meeting/PDF-Download/20251119-Greenfield-Healthy IAQ in Schools.pdf>

AI Assisted Summary: Lisa Greenfield, Midwest Regional Program Manager at the Center for Green Schools, emphasizes the critical importance of improving indoor air quality (IAQ) in schools for both health and educational outcomes. Drawing on her two decades as an educator, she notes that poor IAQ leads to increased student and staff illness, absenteeism, and lower academic performance. Children are especially vulnerable due to their developing respiratory and immune systems and higher breathing rates. Common pollutants—like particulate matter, volatile organic compounds, carbon monoxide, and carbon dioxide—can exacerbate health conditions, such as asthma, the leading cause of absenteeism. Poor IAQ also has economic consequences, including lost parental work time and school funding. Greenfield advocates for layered interventions: improved ventilation, upgraded filtration (e.g., higher MERV-rated filters, HEPA purifiers), and increased air exchanges, all of which reduce disease transmission and pollutant exposure. Investments in IAQ yield significant returns, such as enhanced cognitive function, better attendance, and reduced substitute teacher costs. Ultimately, Greenfield argues that prioritizing clean air in schools supports healthier, more productive students and staff, underpins societal well-being, and should be central to school planning and investment. View Video <https://youtu.be/fclJhMi1Raw>

Health Watch USAsm Meetings



Meetings will resume in 2026

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

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Health Watch USAsm – Articles of Interest



Vascular and inflammatory diseases after COVID-19 infection and vaccination in children and young people in England: a retrospective, population-based cohort study using linked electronic health records

Children and young people have higher risks of rare vascular and inflammatory diseases up to 12 months after a first COVID-19 diagnosis and higher risk of rare myocarditis or pericarditis up to 4 weeks after a first BNT162b2 vaccine, although the risk following vaccination is substantially lower than the risk following infection. These findings are of great importance for national policy makers and caregivers considering vaccination consent for children, and support the public health strategy of COVID-19 vaccination in children and young people to mitigate the more frequent and persistent risks associated with SARS-CoV-2 infection.

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanchi/article/PIIS2352-4642\(25\)00247-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanchi/article/PIIS2352-4642(25)00247-0/fulltext)

mRNA COVID vaccines may be helping some cancer patients fight tumors, researchers say

"Vaccinated lung cancer patients were nearly twice as likely to be alive three years after beginning cancer treatment as the unvaccinated patients. Among melanoma patients, median survival was significantly longer for vaccinated patients – but exactly how much isn't clear, as some of that group were still alive when the data was analyzed.

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/mrna-covid-vaccines-may-be-helping-some-cancer-patients-fight-tumors-researchers-say>

CDC's Failure to Recommend COVID-19 Vaccination - "Shared Clinical Decision-Making" Is Abdication of Responsibility

"Making vaccination contingent on shared clinical decision-making (SCDM) for people at high risk for serious illness from COVID-19 is the opposite path from making the US healthier. The concept of SCDM originates from areas of medical practice where there are judgment calls that require careful discussions about risks and benefits of treatment. A key criterion for the use of (SCDM) is equipoise, meaning that there is no evidence-based best choice of action. The administration may now be tempted to apply SCDM to other important vaccinations, including childhood vaccinations. A better path would be for the administration to rethink its abandonment of a critical tool for public health communication and restore straightforward recommendations for people who would benefit from the COVID-19 vaccine."

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2841538>

More changes which will negatively impact our healthcare infrastructure.

The Trump-Administration Change That Could Cripple Nursing

As part of the funding package, the U.S. Department of Education is ending the Grad PLUS loan program, which allows prospective graduate students to borrow up to the full cost of attendance. Instead, the agency will be instituting borrowing caps, making the maximum figures dependent on whether a student is pursuing a "professional degree." Currently, the list of the graduate programs designated as professional spans a variety of fields, from medicine, dentistry, and law to more surprising inclusions like theology. One notable exemption is that of nursing. Under the proposed language, graduate students pursuing a "professional" degree will be allowed to borrow up to \$50,000 annually with an aggregate loan limit of \$200,000. But a prospective student enrolled in a graduate nursing program could seek only up to \$20,500 annually with an overall limit of \$100,000. The changes will officially go into effect on July 1, 2026. <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/article/trump-administration-nursing-profession-graduate-student-loan-cap.html>

The common vaccines that can prevent chronic disease or some cancers

In addition to cancer, a growing body of research has shown that vaccines can reduce the risk of developing dementia and heart conditions.

- The shots that protect against human papillomavirus are widely known as a cancer prevention vaccine for women and men.
- Being vaccinated against shingles is linked to lower risk of dementia and heart disease.
- The hepatitis B virus is a leading risk factor for liver disease and cancer later in life.
- A 2020 study found higher rates of severe flu infections among adults with certain chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, coronary artery disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, asthma, diabetes and kidney disease.
- One study of 46 million adults in England observed that the incidence of heart attacks and strokes dropped after people received coronavirus vaccinations.

“Because many people haven’t witnessed the devastation once caused by diseases that are now vaccine-preventable, it’s easy to underestimate the risks of not getting vaccinated.”

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2025/11/29/vaccines-chronic-disease-prevent-cancer/>

Health Watch USAsm – Webinar Presentations

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The Statement: “More high-quality RCTs are needed.” is true,

<https://www.sensible-med.com/p/the-cochrane-mask-fiasco>

– Vinay Prasad.

1. But to be high quality a Randomized Controlled Trials must be double-blinded or significant biases can occur.

2. And with public health, RCT often cannot be ethically performed. Take for example the effectiveness of parachutes; which was the subject of the famous BMJ article regarding ethical implications of RCTs.

Smith GC, Peil JP. Parachute use to prevent death and major trauma related to gravitational challenge: systematic review of randomised controlled trials. *BMJ*. 2003 Dec 20;327(7429):1459-61. doi: 10.1136/bmj.327.7429.1459. <https://www.bmj.com/content/327/7429/1459.long>

2025 Webinar Introduction & Science

Behind Masking: Dr. Kevin Kavanagh, Board Chairman of Health Watch USAsm 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

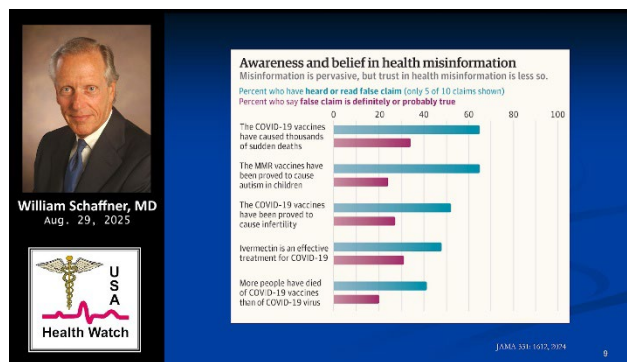
ventilation and quality. Health Watch USAsm Webinar. Aug. 29, 2025. [View Video](#) [View Slides](#)

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.



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 USAsm Webinar Aug. 29, 2025. View Presentation Video: <https://youtu.be/h45wnmG79xl>

WHAT STARTED THE RUMORS?

1998

Lancet published a paper by Dr. Andrew Wakefield, a dramatic study that found a connection between autism and vaccines

The Study Had Some Problems

- Not based on statistics
- No control group
- It relied on people's memories
- Made vague conclusions that weren't statistically valid

Profile: Dr Andrew Wakefield

The suggestion that there is a link between MMR and autism has been one of the biggest health controversies of recent years. But just who is the doctor behind the headlines?

Dr Andrew Wakefield was the lead author of the controversial study, which suggested there may be a link between MMR and autism and bowel disease.

Dr Wakefield stands by his findings

Measles Propagation

2018: Estimated 110,000 cases in the United States

2019: Outbreak in the United Kingdom

NOVA "FACTCHECK" - Calling the "Secret" Wakefield, Sept. 10-11 2018

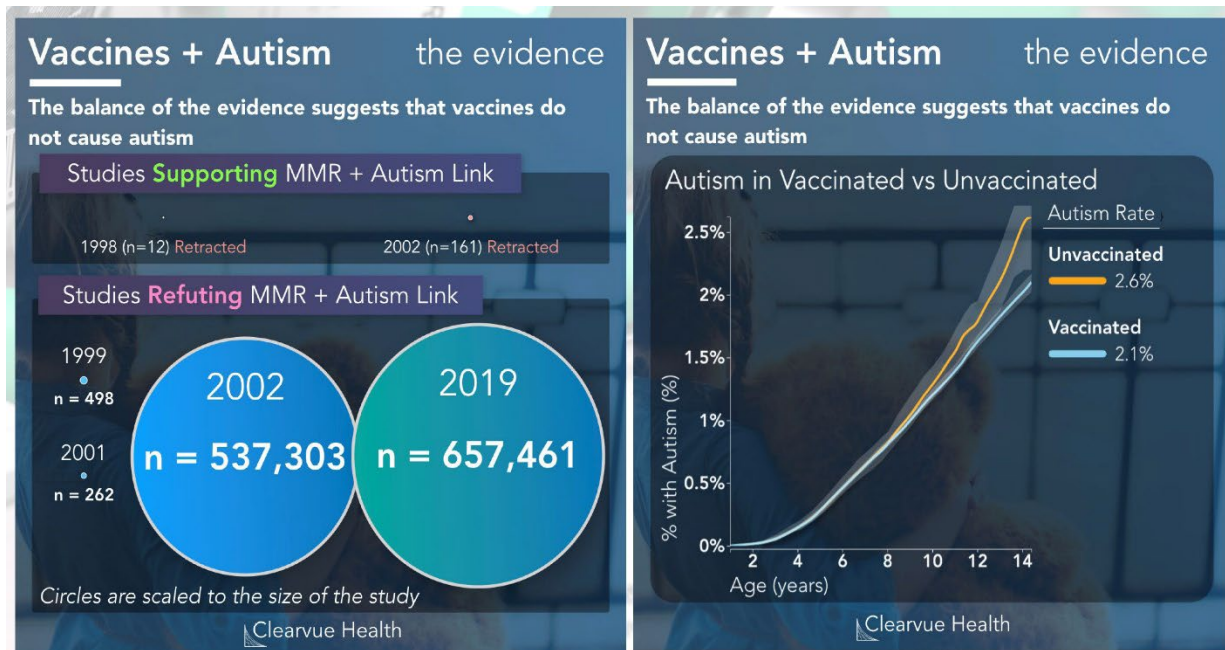
NOVA @BBCcristovna

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 USAsm conference, Aug. 29, 2025. View Video of Presentation:

<https://youtu.be/AOgySUPnGKk>



(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.long> 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

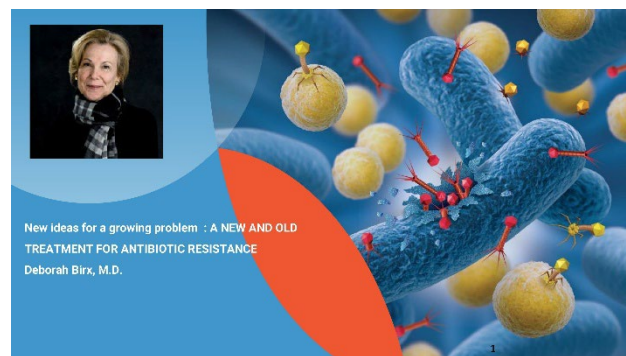
Lisa Baum MA, a lead representative for the New York State Nurses Association, highlighted persistent issues in infection control within healthcare facilities, emphasizing the spread of nosocomial infections including airborne infectious diseases. Despite improvements, infection rates and associated 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.

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.

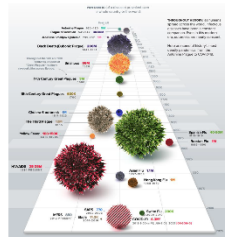
The field now aims to prove efficacy through large phase three superiority trials, which could establish phages as a viable standard of care. Ultimately, phage therapy has the potential not only to treat resistant infections but also to lessen antibiotic use, preserve the microbiome, and improve outcomes in patients with serious bacterial diseases. Health Watch USAsm webinar Aug. 29, 2025. View Presentation Video: <https://youtu.be/CQmpXcliJg8>

When exclusion/elimination may be justified

Modelling suggests we can expect a 'Covid-19 magnitude' pandemic with an 18–26% chance over the next decade, > 2% likelihood per annum

Risk assessment uses multiple factors for assessing severity and controllability

Sources: Madhav et al 2023. Center for Global Development



Source: The Visual Capitalist: <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/history-of-pandemics-deadliest/>

Why elimination should be the default strategy for future severe pandemics

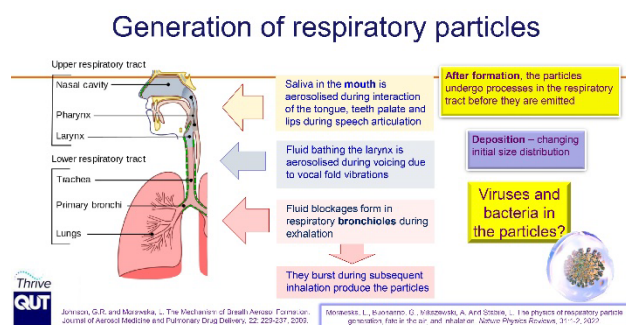
In this presentation, Professor Michael Baker, a key figure in New Zealand's COVID-19 response, discusses the country's elimination strategy against the pandemic. A public health physician and epidemiologist at the University of Otago, Baker highlights that a clear strategy is crucial for effective pandemic 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 USASM 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.

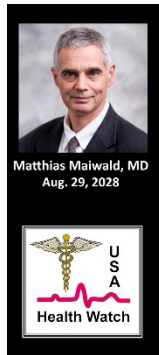
Dr. Morawska highlighted historical resistance to recognizing airborne transmission, noting that scientific consensus and interdisciplinary collaboration were essential in shifting global perspectives, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. She cited the need for robust ventilation far beyond merely 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.

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 USASM 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 USASM's 2025 Conference. View Video: https://youtu.be/bmg_G2tEOKU



Mycoplasma pneumoniae – Situation in China 2023
Current Mycoplasma pneumoniae epidemics among children in Shanghai: unusual pneumonia caused by usual pathogen

What's behind China's mysterious wave of childhood pneumonia?

nature

Increase of respiratory illnesses among children in Beijing, China, during the autumn and winter of 2023

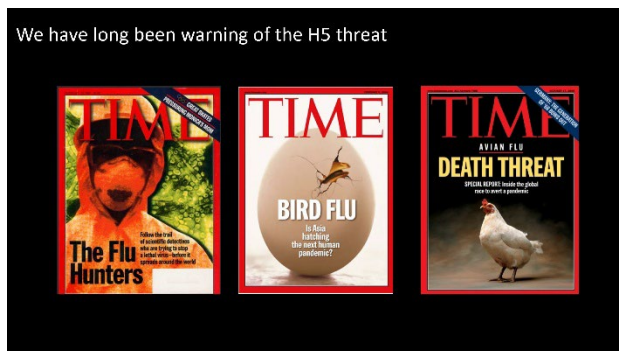
Unusual re-emergence of respiratory pathogens after lifting of COVID-19 restrictions in Singapore

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 quite uneven, with some surging above historical norms and affecting different age groups or presenting more severe cases. Health Watch USASM 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 USAsm webinar Aug. 29, 2025. View Video: <https://youtu.be/GykR462luJQ>

What cats are at risk for bird flu?

- Cats with outdoor access in locations where H5N1 flu virus is infecting birds and mammals
- Cats living on dairy farms, poultry farms, or with backyard flocks
- Exposure to dairy or poultry farmworkers and their clothing

 Shelter Medicine
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

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

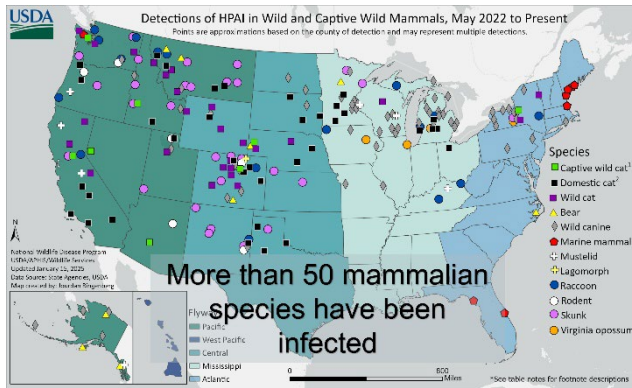
Dr. Cynda Crawford, DMV, PhD discusses H5N1 or "Bird Flu" and its impact on domestic cats, poultry and dairy cattle at the 2025 Health Watch USAsm webinar: "Combating Infectious Disease Challenges."

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.

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 USAsm 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 USASM Webinar Aug. 29, 2025. View Presentation Video: https://youtu.be/SALHVe_aAJ4

Active Continuing Education Courses



ENDEMIC IMPACT & RESPONSIBILITY

4 CME/CEU Credits

CME- Physicians, PA, NHA, NP
Kentucky Approved Credits 4 Hours: EMS, PT,
Respiratory, Dentistry, and Kentucky Board of
Nursing (4.8 credits Nursing)

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

Health Watch USA's 2025 Public Health Continuing Medical Education

International speakers from New Zealand, Australia & Singapore.

Course Objectives:

1. Discuss the dangers imposed by four infectious pathogens, SARS-CoV-2, measles, H5N1, and antibiotic-resistant bacteria.
2. Identify preventative strategies to prevent the spread of airborne pathogens.
3. To better educate patients regarding misinformation surrounding vaccinations, in order to reduce patient infections and promote public safety.
4. Identify the role of bacteriophages in treating antibiotic resistant bacteria.

The course is currently available at <https://healthconference.org> and [Combating Infectious Disease Course - Health Watch USA](#)



This activity has been planned and implemented in accordance with the accreditation requirements and policies of the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) through the Joint Providership of the Kentucky Medical Association and Healthwatch USA. The Kentucky Medical Association is accredited by the ACCME to provide continuing medical education for physicians. The Kentucky Medical Association designates this enduring material activity for 4.5 AMA PRA Category 1 credits.™ Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

We're constantly told to choose products with

**"none of the bad stuff,
only the good stuff."**

But here's the problem: preservatives—often labeled as "bad chemicals"—actually keep the real bad stuff out. They prevent dangerous bacteria and fungi from growing in our vaccines, cosmetics, and food.

When we remove preservatives to make products seem "cleaner," we're not eliminating risk, we're creating it. If people really

wanted to avoid harmful substances, they'd want the preservatives that stop contamination and infection. Sometimes the "artificial" ingredient is exactly what protects us from genuine danger.



THE
UNBIASED
SCIENCE
PODCAST

Health Watch USAsm – 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 USAsm – 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

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