



Health Watch USAsm Newsletter

<https://www.healthwatchusa.org> Apr. 1, 2026

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

Activity for the Month of Mar. Health Watch USAsm:

- 1 Continuing Education Course.
- 2 OpEds
- 1 Meeting 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 2025-2026 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.



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-- [Why elimination should be the default strategy for future severe pandemics, Michael Baker, MBChB](#)

-- [Understanding and Reducing the Spread of Respiratory Pathogens Through The Air, Lidia Morawska, PhD](#)

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-- [H5 Influenza As It Moves Through North American Food Animals, Carol Cardona, DVM, PhD](#)



From Droplets to “Through the Air”: Why Ventilation and Respirators Matter More Than Ever in Infection Prevention

One outcome of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic is a renewed focus on preventing infections from pathogens that spread through the air.... In health care facilities, the recommended minimum ACH has ranged from 6 to 15, depending on the type of service provided in the ventilated room. Procedural rooms require a minimum of

15 ACH, as emergency department waiting areas require a minimum of 12 ACH. However, with the reemergence of measles, these recommendations would be too low to prevent transmission. As measles, SARS-CoV-2, and influenza circulate simultaneously, this article explains why ventilation, respirators, and higher air change rates must become core infection prevention strategies in health care facilities. References Infection Control Today. March 13, 2028. <https://www.infectioncontrolday.com/view/droplets-through-air-why-ventilation-respirators-matter-more-than-ever-infection-prevention>



AI has its own social network and jobs humans badly need | Opinion

The MAGA promise of promoting human jobs by incentivizing the construction of factories is falling prey to humanoid robots, who will largely benefit from this initiative. The United States’ premier robotic company, Boston Dynamics, was sold to Hyundai, a South Korean company, in June of 2021. Hyundai will be using its technology to largely operate its new factories being built in the United States. Boston Dynamics’

groundbreaking robot dog “spot” is designed for non-military usage. Another company, Ghost Robotics was accused of using Boston Dynamics tech to manufacture military adaptable quadruped robots. There was a lawsuit between the two, which was reported as settled in 2025. Ghost Robotics was bought out by a South Korean defense giant. The company is a spinoff from the University of Pennsylvania and in part was supported by federal funds. Boston Dynamics has also received significant support from the U.S. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). **References** Courier Journal. Mar. 18, 2026 <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/opinion/contributors/2026/03/18/ai-robots-job-social-network-moltbook-amazon-ups-hyundai-boston-dynamics-ghost-robotics/89088741007/>



Characterizing Violent Injuries to Inform Prevention among Healthcare Workers

View Youtube Video: <https://youtu.be/tYz0X4dFKjM>

Dr. Devin Hawkins, ScD describes the initial report of a project that is designed to characterize and prevent violent injuries among healthcare workers. National Bureau of Labor Statistics data show healthcare and social assistance workers have the highest severe workplace-violence injury rates, with rising trends

before COVID-19 and apparent acceleration during and after the pandemic. Risk varies by setting and job (e.g., nursing/residential care facilities; nurses and aides), and disparities are evident, with higher rates among Black healthcare practitioners and support workers. Using IRB-approved data from OSHA 300 injury logs from 14 Massachusetts hospitals (2022–2024), the research team identified 333 violent incidents among 5,035 total reported injuries/illnesses, then applied an AI/large language model schema to extract circumstances from narrative descriptions (injury type, body part, context, location, triggers, patient state, team response, weapons/objects, outcomes, and medical actions). Early patterns include being struck/kicked/punched, bites, grabbing/twisting, and injuries to the face and upper extremities; events often occur during routine care, ambulation/bathroom assistance, restraint/security interventions, or patient elopement. The team is refining categories, measuring agreement between automated and reviewed coding, and plans to translate results into transparent SAS code and test on future data (2024–2025), culminating in a public report. The presentation highlights prevention-oriented policies, including California’s healthcare violence-prevention standard and a pending Massachusetts bill emphasizing risk assessment, prevention plans, training, reporting, and worker support. Health Watch USAsm meeting Mar. 19, 2026. View Youtube Video: <https://youtu.be/tYz0X4dFKjM>

Key points

- Healthcare and social assistance workers experience the highest rates of severe workplace-violence injuries nationally, with increases seen pre-COVID and during and after the pandemic.
- Violent-injury risk varies substantially by setting and occupation (e.g., nursing/residential care; nurses, aides), and contributes to disparities (higher rates among Black healthcare workers in multiple groups).
- The project used IRB-approved OSHA 300 injury log data from 14 Massachusetts hospitals (2022–2024): 5,035 total reported injuries/illnesses, including 333 violent incidents.
- Violent cases were identified using established SAS code (NIOSH/Stephen Burke) plus manual review to capture misses.
- A large language model–based schema is used to extract structured details from free-text narratives (injury type, body part, context, location, triggers, patient state, response, weapons/objects, outcomes, medical action).
- Early recurring patterns include strikes (kick/punch), bites, grabbing/twisting, and injuries to the face and upper extremities; common contexts include routine care and ambulation/bathroom assistance.

- Additional themes include incidents during restraint/security events, preventing patient elopement, disorientation/agitation on waking or post-anesthesia, and variability in narrative detail (sometimes minimal descriptions).
- Next steps include refining categories, checking agreement between automated and reviewed coding, translating to transparent SAS code, validating of 2024–2025 data, and producing a public report regarding prevention and policy.



Upcoming Meetings.

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Meetings: May 20, 2026 at 7 PM ET

Robert McDonald, MD, who will be discussing the rise of congenital syphilis in the United States.

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

In the News

Tuberculosis and Infection Prevention: What IPC Professionals Need to Know for World TB DAY 2026

"Patient education is important and prevalent, but the social and political climate is resistant to medical preventative strategies. "Unfortunately, the current public health climate is facilitating the spread and lethality of TB," Kevin Kavanagh, MD, Board Chairman at Health Watch USA, and another EAB member, wrote. "A culmination of antibiotic overuse, the public's aversion to airborne control measures, along with an increase in immune dysfunction in our population, has culminated in a worldwide resurgence of highly antibiotic-resistant TB.'" Infection Control Today. Mar. 24, 2026. <https://www.infectioncontrolday.com/view/tuberculosis-infection-prevention-what-ipc-professionals-need-know-world-tb-day-2026>



Health Watch USAsm – Articles of Interest



It has been over 50 years since I started my medical education and practice. I have never before encountered a sign such as this. An era has ended.

Up to 60% of health care workers may have long COVID 4 years after infection

“Comparative analyses show that the risk of developing PASC is highest after infection with ancestral SARS-CoV-2 (aSCV2) and decreases with subsequent variants,” the study authors noted.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/covid-19/60-health-care-workers-may-have-long-covid-4-years-after-infection>

As many have suspected, COVID-19 deaths during the pandemic may well have been undercounted.

Applying machine learning to identify unrecognized COVID-19 deaths recorded as other causes of death in the United States

"... we use machine learning trained on US death certificates from March 2020 to December 2021 to predict 155,536 (95% uncertainty interval: 150,062 to 161,112) unrecognized COVID-19 deaths. This indicates that 19% more COVID-19 deaths occurred in the US than officially reported."

<https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.aef5697>



An excellent graphic from Long COVID Kids.



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Lived experience resources

Graphic Novels regarding Long COVID Lives, produced by Long COVID Kids and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Univ. of London.

Graphic Novel, Long COVID Lives:

<https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/media/97536>

Graphic Novel, Living with Long COVID: A Young Person's Guide

<https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/media/97541>

Graphic Novel, Living with Long COVID: A Young Person's Glossary

<https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/media/97546>

Living with Long Covid: *A Young Person's Guide*

SARS-CoV-2 Infection Tied to Increased Thyroid-Disease Risk

MDedge: "A study from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine found that SARS-CoV-2 infection increases the risk for new-onset thyroid disease. Researchers analyzed data from the Montefiore Health System, including 15,372 hospitalized COVID-19 patients, 41,757 non-hospitalized COVID-19 patients, and 171,141 control individuals. Hospitalized patients showed a 2.99% incidence of thyroid disease, compared to 1.39% in non-hospitalized patients and 1.03% in control individuals. The study highlights the need for healthcare systems to prepare for increased thyroid disease management. The study was published in The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism and did not receive any outside funding."

<https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/sars-cov-2-infection-linked-higher-thyroid-disease-risk-2026a10005s8>

This article below corroborates the findings in the Feb. 2026 Health Watch USAsm presentation, which reported research showing a higher incidence of kidney disease after a SARS-CoV-2 infection than after vaccination. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StZRHQxcD7Q>

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Catching Covid significantly raises the risk of developing kidney disease, researchers find

"The virus was found to increase the chances that patients will develop the incurable condition by around 50 per cent. Researchers at Penn State College of Medicine in the US, who carried out the study, are now calling for Covid patients to be regularly checked for kidney disease." "And the number of patients (Kidney) in the UK is expected to rise by about 400,000 in the next decade." <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15603003/Covid-risk-kidney-disease-research.html>



I fear this may be correct, decades to repair.

"The mechanisms maintained by the Federal Government to monitor and report health concerns such as drug overdoses, maternal mortality, and food security have been as beleaguered as the doctors and scientists who rely on them; thousands of datasets are no longer publicly available, leaving Americans—and the world—unprepared to respond to future crises. And crises are looming: in November, 2025, the first human infection (and death) from the H5N5 strain of avian flu was recorded in Washington state; pertussis, which killed 13 people in the USA in 2025, continues to spread across the country; and the measles outbreak that began in January of last year now threatens the elimination status of the USA and Mexico. Despite these developments, Kennedy has continued to spread misinformation and push politicised agendas at the expense of the country's most vulnerable."

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(26\)00414-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(26)00414-9/fulltext)

Words and strong federal recommendations matter, and we will be paying with lives and livelihoods lost for these cutbacks in programs for decades to come.

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U.S. Newborn Hepatitis B Vaccination Rates Plunge, Reversing Years of Gains
— National data show rates dropped more than 10 points in 2 years after 2023 peak

Among more than 12 million infants, birth-dose hepatitis B vaccination rates rose from 67.5% in January 2017 to a peak of 83.5% in February 2023 before declining to 73.2% by August 2025, reported Joshua M. Rothman, MD, MS, of the University of California San Diego, and colleagues in a research letter published in [JAMA](https://www.jama.com).

<https://www.medpagetoday.com/infectiousdisease/hepatitis/119986>

Another study documenting the safety of COVID-19 vaccination. The researchers found a lower not a higher incidence of sudden death after vaccination.

Association between COVID-19 vaccination and sudden death in apparently healthy younger individuals: A population-based case-control study

"Of 6,365,451 eligible individuals, we identified 4,963 (0.08%) cases meeting our definition of sudden death (median age 36 years, 74.4% male). In the primary analysis, COVID-19 vaccination was associated with a lower risk of sudden death (adjusted odds ratio [aOR] = 0.57; 95% confidence interval (CI) [0.53,0.61]; $p < 0.001$). "

"These findings do not support the hypothesis that COVID-19 vaccines increase the risk of sudden cardiac death in young healthy adults."

<https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1004924>

Glandular fever is caused by the EB virus or a long term sequela of mononucleosis. There is increasing evidence that SARS-CoV-2 infection increases the risk of EB reactivation as a long-term sequela.

Swedish study reveals COVID-19 may increase glandular fever risk

"We were surprised that even people who did not have severe symptoms but tested positive for COVID-19 appear to develop a weakened immune system and a higher risk of, for example, glandular fever. It may also be that the coronavirus further increases the risk of chronic fatigue." [https://www.news-](https://www.news-medical.net/news/20260317/Swedish-study-reveals-COVID-19-may-increase-glandular-fever-risk.aspx)

[medical.net/news/20260317/Swedish-study-reveals-COVID-19-may-increase-glandular-fever-risk.aspx](https://www.news-medical.net/news/20260317/Swedish-study-reveals-COVID-19-may-increase-glandular-fever-risk.aspx)

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

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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

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- 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.infectioncontrolday.com/view/70-covid-19-cases-transmitted-by-children>
- FDA's ridiculous claims about COVID vaccines hurt KY kids. Courier journal. Dec. 31, 2025. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2026/01/02/fda-covid-vaccine-cdc-trump/87974411007/>

Active Public Health Continuing Education Courses

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2024: 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

2025-2026: Combating Infectious Disease Challenges

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 Challenges](#)

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 – 2023 & 2024 Conference Presentations

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COVID-19: Endemic Impact & Responsibility



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)

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-](https://journals.lww.com/md-journal/fulltext/2024/03220/long_covid_s_impact_on_patients_workers_.50.aspx)

[journal/fulltext/2024/03220/long_covid_s_impact_on_patients_workers_.50.aspx](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/](https://www.healthwatchusa.org/conference2023/healthconference.org-files/2023Conference_downloads/)

[20231101-HWUSA_Brochure-5.pdf](https://www.healthwatchusa.org/conference2023/healthconference.org-files/2023Conference_downloads/20231101-HWUSA_Brochure-5.pdf)

Health Watch USAsm – 2025 Webinar Presentations



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, Pell 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.



William Schaffner, MD
Aug. 29, 2025



Awareness and belief in health misinformation
Misinformation is pervasive, but trust in health misinformation is less so.
Percent who have heard or read false claim (only 5 of 18 claims shown)
Percent who say false claim is definitely or probably true

False Claim	Percent who say false claim is definitely or probably true
The COVID-19 vaccines have caused thousands of sudden deaths	~65%
The MMR vaccines have been proved to cause autism in children	~60%
The COVID-19 vaccines have been proved to cause infertility	~55%
Ivermectin is an effective treatment for COVID-19	~45%
More people have died of COVID-19 vaccines than of COVID-19 virus	~35%

JGIM 311 (02), 2024 9

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>

Measles 50 years later

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 made his first TV appearance in 2001

Measles Propagation

2011 Wakefield et al. Lancet

2012 Wakefield et al. Lancet

2013 Wakefield et al. Lancet

2014 Wakefield et al. Lancet

2015 Wakefield et al. Lancet

2016 Wakefield et al. Lancet

2017 Wakefield et al. Lancet

2018 Wakefield et al. Lancet

2019 Wakefield et al. Lancet

2020 Wakefield et al. Lancet

2021 Wakefield et al. Lancet

2022 Wakefield et al. Lancet

2023 Wakefield et al. Lancet

2024 Wakefield et al. Lancet

2025 Wakefield et al. Lancet

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>

Vaccines + Autism the evidence

The balance of the evidence suggests that vaccines do not cause autism

Studies Supporting MMR + Autism Link

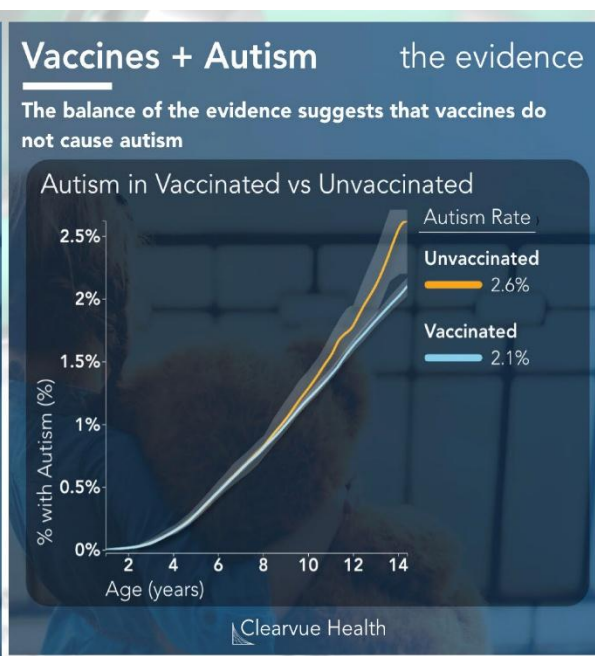
- 1998 (n=12) Retracted
- 2002 (n=161) Retracted

Studies Refuting MMR + Autism Link

- 1999 n = 498
- 2001 n = 262
- 2002 n = 537,303
- 2019 n = 657,461

Circles are scaled to the size of the study

Clearvue Health



<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.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.

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Practical ways to decrease risk of exposure & transmission



Elastomeric Respirators are reusable masks with exchangeable filters. The facemasks are made of synthetic or natural rubber that allow repeated cleaning, disinfection, storage, and reuse. <https://www.cdc.gov/osh/nce/respirators/elastomeric.html>



Powered Air-Purifying Respirators (PAPRs) are powered devices that use a blower to pull air through attached filters (for particles) to clean it before delivering it to the wearer. <https://www.cdc.gov/osh/nce/2018-126/pdf/2018-126.pdf>

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

dwelt 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.

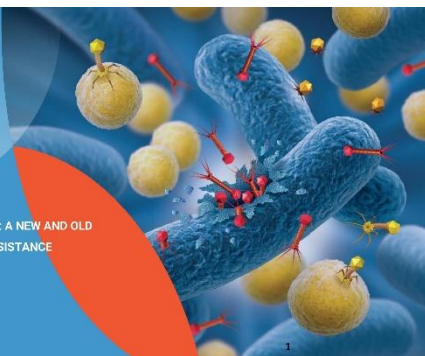
Lisa Baum advocates for layered controls: improved identification and isolation protocols, robust testing, enhanced staffing, better ventilation, and a shift to reusable PPE. She stresses the necessity of regulatory reforms to ensure consistent and effective infection prevention and supports empowering 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

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New Ideas for a growing problem : A NEW AND OLD TREATMENT FOR ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE
Deborah Birx, M.D.



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.

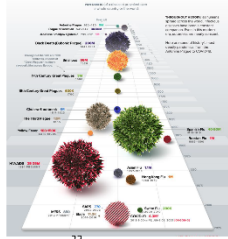
The field now aims to prove efficacy through large phase three superiority trials, which could establish phages as a viable standard of care. Ultimately, phage therapy has the potential not only to treat resistant infections but also to lessen antibiotic use, preserve the microbiome, and improve outcomes in patients with serious bacterial diseases. Health Watch USAsm webinar Aug. 29, 2025. View Presentation Video: <https://youtu.be/CQmpXcljg8>

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



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

Why elimination should be the default strategy for future severe pandemics

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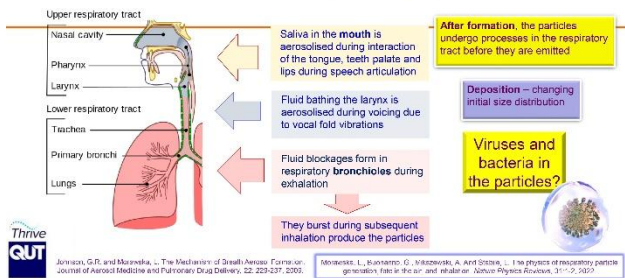
In this presentation, Professor Michael Baker, a key figure in New Zealand's COVID-19 response, discusses the country's elimination strategy against the pandemic. A public health physician and epidemiologist at the University of Otago, Baker highlights that a clear strategy is crucial for effective pandemic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

Generation of respiratory particles



Understanding and Reducing the Spread of Respiratory Pathogens Through The Air

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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

Matthias Maiwald, MD
Aug. 29, 2028

USA
Health Watch

Mycoplasma pneumoniae – Situation in China 2023

Current *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* epidemic among children in Shanghai: unusual pneumoniae caused by novel pathogen

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

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

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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

UF 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."

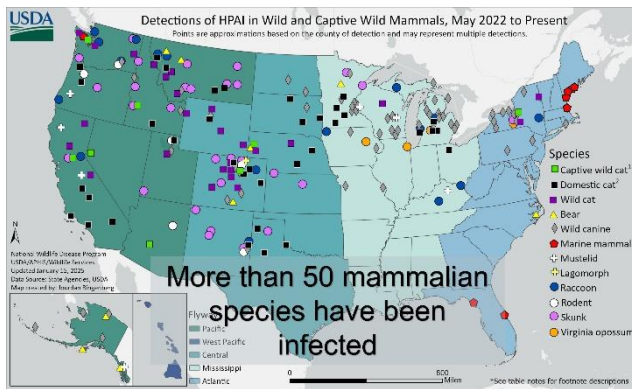
Presentation Summary: The presentation by Dr. Cynda Crawford explores the evolving ecology and impact of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza (bird flu) across the United States. Traditionally, wild waterfowl are the natural hosts of

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

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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

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