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CDC HICPAC Public Comment

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I would like to ask the CDC to pivot their COVID-19 policy from one which almost solely relies on vaccination to one which also encourages the public to adopt other public health measures.

Two studies from Harvard(1) and Columbia University(2) have found the new bivalent booster performed no better than the ancestral booster. This is also supported by the data presented at the ACIP meeting which found that the monovalent BA.5 booster gave just as strong of a response to the ancestral strain as the monovalent ancestral booster.(3)

One must also ask, if immunological imprinting is taking place, shouldn't we be using a monovalent BA.5 booster and vaccines so we do not optimize the immune response to the ancestral strain?

The CDC's current commercial which encourages obtaining a booster, also appears to discourage other public health measures such as social distancing and masking. People are visualized unmasked in a crowded elevator, and on public transportation.(4)

Almost 2% of our workforce is not working because of Long COVID.(5) This is expected to increase as infections and reinfections occur; and as natural and vaccine-induced immunity wanes.

In Kentucky, we have a record low unemployment rate of 3.8%(6) but 50% of our job openings are going unfilled.(7) This is an ominous sign for the health of our workforce.

Specifically, the CDC needs to give clear and non-contradictory advice. The following policies need to encourage:

1. The isolation for those infected should be at least 10 days and to follow the FDA's advice of three negative rapid tests in two to three days before release.(8) At 12 days after symptom onset, 20% are still infectious.(9)
2. Masking requirements need to be reinstated at all hospitals. With home testing, community rates are indeterminable, and with other infectious diseases surging high-risk hospital patients need to be protected.
3. We need to start advocating for the use of N95 masks in public settings, the provision of curbside pickup with retail establishments, and to set firm ventilatory standards.
4. The CDC needs to focus on preventing infections and Long COVID. And use these metrics for measuring success.

Finally, please discontinue the commercial regarding maskless individuals gleefully depending upon their boosters. You cannot vaccinate your way out of this pandemic. And paxlovid cannot be taken by many high-risk individuals, and it appears to be having significant problems with rebound. There is difficult messaging which needs to be done and if we do not do it, we will be fueling the pandemic and lives and livelihoods will be lost.



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