



Health Watch USAsm Newsletter

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

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

Activity for the Month of June - Health Watch USAsm:

- 1 Continuing Education Course.
- 1 Article
- 2 Meeting Presentations
- 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 Nov. 1st, 2025 Conference Presentation Videos & Proceedings: Combating Infectious Disease Challenges: <https://www.healthwatchusa.org/conference2025/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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- Vaccine Mandates, Military Readiness, and National Security- Kevin Kavanagh, MD, MS

3. Future Meeting Presentations:

Aug. 19, 2026. 7 PM ET Jeannie Cimiotti, PhD, RN, Nurse Retention and Promotion of the Workplace Environment.

Sep. 16, 2026. 7 PM ET Ann Zaia, PhD, MSN, Mast Cell Inflammation

Oct. 21, 2026. 7 PM ET Omer Awan MD, MPH, Cyclospora – Incidence, Treatment, Diagnosis and What Needs to be Done.

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- Webinar introduction & science behind masking, Kevin T. Kavanagh, MD, MS
- Communications and pandemic mitigation strategies—Health Watch USA 2025, William Schaffner, MD
- Measles 50 Years Later, Wilmore Webley, PhD
- A View from the Frontlines: The Current State of Infection Control in U.S. Healthcare Facilities, Lisa Baum, MA
- Bacterial Phages, a New and Old Treatment for Antibiotic Resistant Bacteria, Deborah Birx, MD
- 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
- Unusual re-emergence of respiratory pathogens after lifting of COVID-19 restrictions in Singapore, Matthias Maiwald, MD
- Bird Flu, the risks and prevention of a future pandemic, Richard Webby, PhD
- Chickens, Cows, and Cats: A Barnyard Story about Bird Flu, Cynda Crawford, DVM, PhD
- H5 Influenza As It Moves Through North American Food Animals, Carol Cardona, DVM, PhD



Cyclospora Outbreak Continues: Expert Explains Symptoms, Testing, and Prevention

Explosive diarrhea is spreading across our nation. The severe watery diarrhea can last a few days to more than a month. Untreated, it can relapse and cause long-term debilitating symptoms. Cyclospora, a parasite that causes the severe diarrhea, can be difficult to detect because routine stool tests may miss it and symptoms can appear up to two weeks after exposure. Reporting gaps, intermittent shedding, and reduced federal surveillance complicate case counts, though many states have reported infections and Michigan has experienced the

largest burden. Investigators have linked many cases to Taco Bell and iceberg lettuce supplied by Taylor Farms, suggesting a common food source rather than widespread local restaurant risk. The article stresses that person-to-person spread is rare, most patients recover, and effective treatment is available with trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole, while ivermectin is not appropriate. Practical prevention includes washing produce and hands, discarding outer lettuce leaves, cooking produce when possible, and seeking care for prolonged diarrhea, especially among older, frail, or immunocompromised people. Infection Control Today July 17, 2026. <https://www.infectioncontroltoday.com/view/cyclospora-outbreak-continues-expert-explains-symptoms-testing-prevention>

Health Watch USAsm Presentations



Science, Pseudoscience and the Decline of Public Health

Dr. Kevin Kavanagh argues that public health in the United States is being threatened by a growing conflict between mainstream medical science and pseudoscience, especially regarding vaccines. He criticizes efforts by the Department of Health and Human Services with their challenging of journal retractions, protecting flawed anti-vaccine studies, and blocking publication of vaccine safety and effectiveness research. Kavanagh explains that passive reporting systems such as VAERS can

identify potential safety signals but cannot prove causation by themselves. He contrasts questionable vaccine claims with large, methodologically stronger studies showing vaccine safety, including research on aluminum adjuvants and adverse events. He also defends established study designs used to evaluate vaccine effectiveness, noting that randomized trials can be unethical in public health contexts. Beyond academic disputes, he warns that undermining publication integrity damages public trust, weakens vaccination programs, worsens disease control, and contributes to scientist attrition and our nation's brain drain to other

countries. He concludes that data quality, consistent scientific standards, and public health consequences must guide policy. Health Watch USA(sm) meeting. July 15, 2026.

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View YouTube Video: <https://youtu.be/qSaWz6Jz5XY>

Download PDF of PowerPoint Slides: <https://www.healthwatchusa.org/HWUSA-Presentations-Meeting/PDF-Download/20260715-Science-Pseudoscience.pdf>

Related OpEd: <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/opinion/contributors/2026/06/27/rfk-jr-vaccine-research-science-research-public-health-maha-antivax/90605025007/>

Related OpEd - Courier Journal and Microsoft News Network: <https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/general/rfk-maha-vaccine-study-censorship-is-driving-us-brain-drain-opinion/ar-AA26FK0G>



Vaccine Mandates, Military Readiness, and National Security

Dr. Kevin Kavanagh, MD, MS discusses the importance of mandatory vaccination of the military, as evidenced by the recent large influenza outbreak at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio Texas. The history of vaccinations in the military is discussed along with their necessity for force readiness. Health Watch USA Meeting July 15, 2026. View YouTube Video: <https://youtu.be/sl91sc72BN4>

Download PDF of PowerPoint Slides: https://www.healthwatchusa.org/HWUSA-Presentations-Meeting/PDF-Download/20260715-military_vaccination_readiness_presentation.pdf

Download a related Courier Journal OpEd & Microsoft News Network: <https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/other/hegseth-s-end-of-military-vaccine-mandates-risks-us-security-opinion/ar-AA224QZi>

View YouTube Video: <https://youtu.be/sl91sc72BN4>



Upcoming Meetings.

Aug. 19, 2026. 7 PM ET Jeannie Cimiotti, PhD, RN, Nurse Retention and Promotion of the Workplace Environment.

Sep. 16, 2026. 7 PM ET Ann Zaia, PhD, MSN, Mast Cell Inflammation

Oct. 21, 2026. 7 PM ET Omer Awan MD, MPH, Cyclospora – Incidence, Treatment, Diagnosis and What Needs to be Done.

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

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Huge Cyclospora outbreak spreads to 9 states

"The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said that the Cyclospora outbreak linked to iceberg lettuce from Taylor Farms has expanded to nine states and now includes Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia.

The newly affected states are Illinois, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Pennsylvania.

During the CDC's investigation, scientists collected data from 1,947 people with cyclosporiasis (infection with Cyclospora), including 98 who were hospitalized, who reported eating at a Taco Bell restaurant in one of the nine states. People reported being sickened from June 22 to July 20." CIDRAP:

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/cyclospora/huge-cyclospora-outbreak-spreads-9-states>

Investigation of 9-State Outbreak of Cyclospora Illnesses: Iceberg Lettuce (July 2026)

"Taylor Farms de Mexico, announced that they are voluntarily removing all iceberg lettuce sourced from central Mexico from the U.S. market. On July 17, Taylor Farms initiated a recall, which includes Marketside-brand product available at Walmart described as "Iceberg Salad 12-oz or 24-oz" and "Shredded Lettuce 8-oz or 16-oz" with Best if Used By dates of 7/18/2026 to 8/3/2026 and July 18 to Aug 3, 2026, respectively.

Most people infected with Cyclospora develop diarrhea, with frequent bowel movements. Other common symptoms include loss of appetite, weight loss, stomach cramps/pain, bloating, increased gas, nausea, and fatigue. Vomiting, body aches, headache, and fever may be noted. Some people who are infected with Cyclospora do not have any symptoms. If not treated, the illness can lead to dehydration and severe complications that may require higher levels of care. These complications may last from a few days to a month or longer. Symptoms may seem to go away and then return one or more times (relapse).

Immunocompromised persons may experience more severe illness of longer duration along with complications requiring close medical attention." FDA: <https://www.fda.gov/food/outbreaks-foodborne->

Half of Americans struggle to afford groceries and gas, exclusive poll finds

"About 57% of polled Americans also believe economy is worsening in grim portrait of cost of living crisis, according to Harris survey for the Guardian... Despite stable employment and record-high stock markets, more Americans believe the overall economy is getting worse (57%) than in February (46%), when the poll was last conducted and before the war in the Middle East sent gas prices soaring. Fewer people today also believe the economy is getting better (16%, compared with 28% in February) and more say their financial security has gotten worse...Two-thirds of Americans – including 49% of Republicans – said they have little faith that the federal government will improve the cost-of-living crisis they face."

https://www.theguardian.com/business/2026/jul/07/cost-of-living-poll-groceries-gas?CMP=GTUS_email

Below is another article warning about the use of AI in research. It is becoming all too common and the authors are not doing proper diligence on checking the content or adding "human" insight.

Medical students are using a popular research tool to pump out misleading studies.

Critics say TriNetX's easy analyses of electronic medical records fuel quick-and-dirty publications from inexperienced authors

"He and others say the easy-to-use platform may be allowing inexperienced researchers—potentially aided by artificial intelligence (AI)—to churn out unreliable and bias-ridden studies with unrivaled speed. "We've seen a lot of these TriNetX studies, and they all seem to have very similar flaws," says Samy Suissa, a pharmacoepidemiologist at McGill University. "They seem to always find these spectacular effects, remarkable benefits for drugs on all kinds of outcomes." "

-- "In 2025, nearly 2700 publications mentioned TriNetX in the title or abstract, up from just 33 only 5 years prior..."

-- "But the combination of inexperienced users and TriNetX's push-button analysis tools can lead to shoddy publications, which often do not correct for potential biases that can make treatments appear more effective than they are."

<https://www.science.org/content/article/medical-students-are-using-popular-research-tool-pump-out-misleading-studies>

Below is an important large study observing a four fold increase in Tuberculosis after having COVID-19 with an 8-month median follow-up.

COVID-19 as a Potential Trigger for Tuberculosis: Insights From a Large-Scale Japanese Insurance Database Analysis

"After matching, 3,097,422 individuals were included per group. During 8-month median follow-up, 886 participants initiated TB treatment. The HR among COVID-19 infected individuals was 4.14 (95% CI: 3.51–4.89) versus matched controls. This study provides robust population-based evidence demonstrating a moderate association between prior COVID-19 and subsequent initiation of active tuberculosis treatment, particularly in those with prior TB history."

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/jgf2.70139?msocid=0e23f5bf8dc06fce3e7be2c98c876e03>

NEWS 06.25.2026: Sanders Releases Internal HHS Emails Demonstrating Secretary Kennedy's Politicization of CDC, Interference with Vaccines

"WASHINGTON, June 25 – Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP), today released internal emails from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) showing Secretary Robert F Kennedy, Jr.'s politicization of HHS, willingness to ignore vaccine science and undermine the basic health and safety of Americans.

The emails, provided to the committee by former CDC Chief Medical Officer Dr. Debra Houry, include the following revelations:

Secretary Kennedy altered vaccine recommendations and released material to the public without CDC expert review or input.

Secretary Kennedy specifically directed the agenda of the CDC's vaccine advisory panel, known as ACIP, towards restricting access to vaccines.

Secretary Kennedy directed the cancellation of flu vaccine campaigns amid a severe flu season. Andrew Nixon, HHS Director of Communications, confirmed in an email that "This was a direct ask from Secretary Kennedy."

Secretary Kennedy handpicked researchers to access confidential data to demonstrate the long-disproven claim that vaccines cause autism.

Secretary Kennedy misled members of Congress on several occasions, including in interactions with Senator Hassan on COVID vaccine recommendations, Senator Wyden on vaccine access and HELP Committee Chair Cassidy on the CDC Director's ability to act independently.

Secretary Kennedy's chief of staff told then-CDC Director Susan Monarez that political staff at CDC and HHS would need to review "major decisions at CDC...before they go into effect." Less than a week later, Secretary Kennedy fired Director Monarez for failing to rubber stamp recommendations from ACIP.

Secretary Kennedy's senior advisor sought advice on how to remove vaccines from the Vaccines for Children program, which provides vaccines at no cost to eligible children. In an email, he asked, "What legally needs to happen or should be considered if a vaccine is going to be removed from the [Vaccines for Children] program at CDC?" The Vaccines for Children program is estimated to have prevented about 508 million illnesses in children born during 1994 through 2023. " June 25, 2026. U.S. Senate HELP Committee.

<https://www.help.senate.gov/dem/newsroom/press/news-sanders-releases-internal-hhs-emails-demonstrating-secretary-kennedys-politicization-of-cdc-interference-with-vaccines>

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](#)
- Vaccines Do Not Cause Autism: [Download Resources](#)

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

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International speakers from New Zealand, Australia & Singapore. 4.5 credit hours for Physicians - Category I AMA Credit. 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.

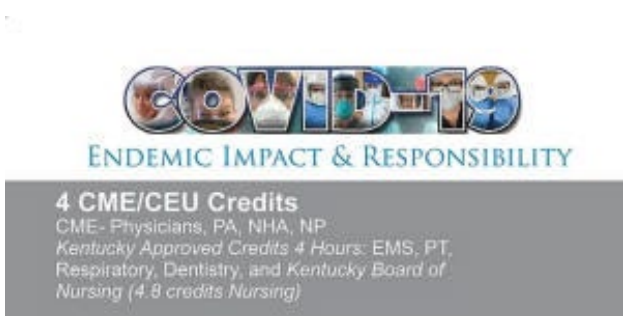
The course is currently available at <https://healthconference.org> and [Combating Infectious Disease Challenges](#)

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



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

Health Watch USAsm – 2025 Webinar Presentations

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2025 Webinar Introduction & Science Behind Masking: Dr. Kevin Kavanagh, Board Chairman of Health



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>

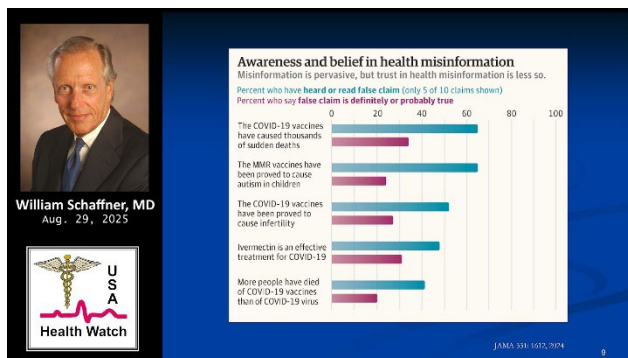
Watch USAsm gives the webinar introduction and discusses misinformation and disinformation regarding masking. Similar barriers found with adopting face masks can also be found with other public health strategies. Exposure dosage to an airborne pathogen is important in reducing the risks of transmission, 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.infectioncontrolday.com/view/how-misinformation-tries-discredit-science-behind-maskng>

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

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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>

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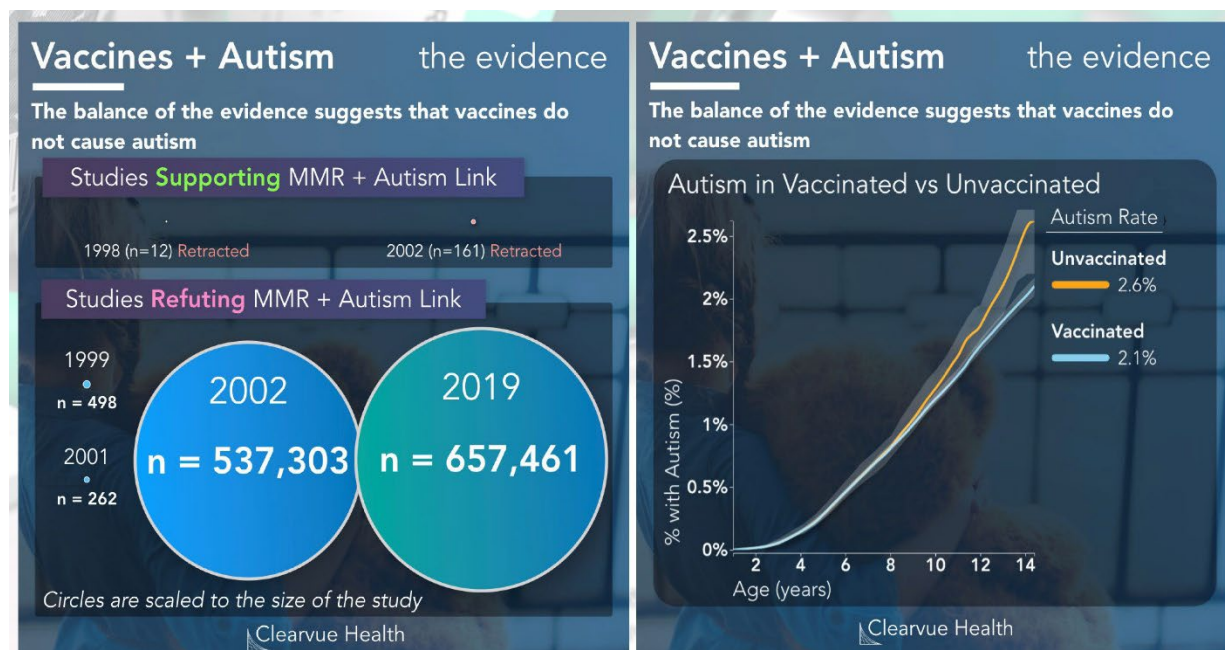
Measles 50 years later

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>



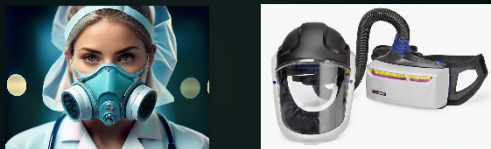
<https://www.clearvuehealth.com/b/autism-mmr-stats/>

(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>

(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/>

Practical ways to decrease risk of exposure & transmission



Elastomeric Respirators are reusable masks with exchangeable filters. The facepieces are made of synthetic or natural rubber that allow repeated cleaning, disinfection, storage, and reuse. <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npg/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/niosh/docs/2018-126/pdf/2018-126.pdf>

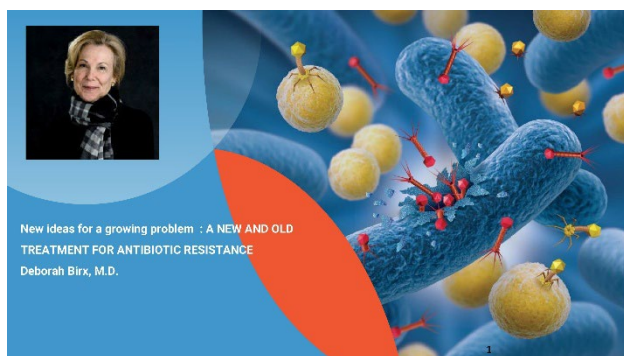
A View from the Frontlines: The Current State of Infection Control in U.S. Healthcare Facilities

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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>



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

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

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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.

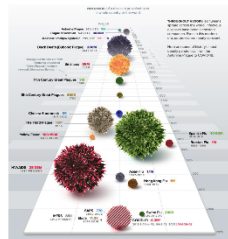
The field now aims to prove efficacy through large phase three superiority trials, which could establish phages as a viable standard of care. Ultimately, phage therapy has the potential not only to treat resistant infections but also to lessen antibiotic use, preserve the microbiome, and improve outcomes 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

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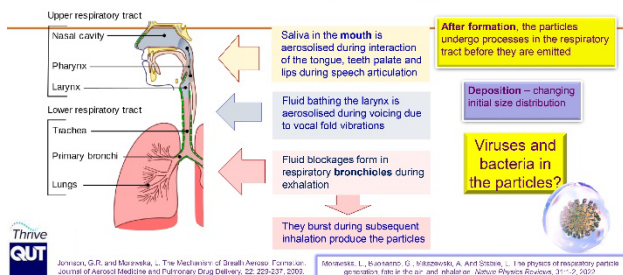
In this presentation, Professor Michael Baker, a key figure in New Zealand's COVID-19 response, discusses the country's elimination strategy against the pandemic. A public health physician and epidemiologist at the University of Otago, Baker highlights that a clear strategy is crucial for effective pandemic 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/I7DIJA87sl8>

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.

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>

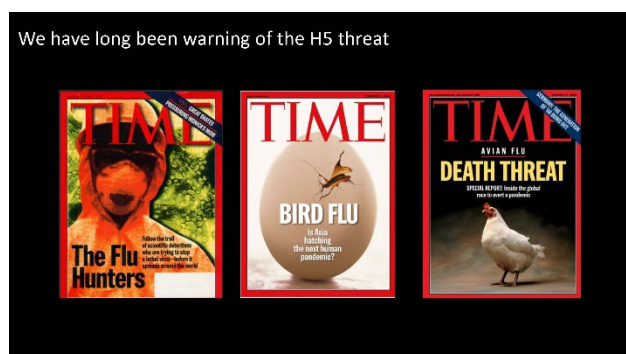
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As restrictions were gradually eased, certain non-enveloped viruses like enterovirus/rhinovirus and adenovirus reappeared first, likely due to their environmental stability at phases of increased social contact. Other pathogens returned in unusual 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

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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





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

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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."

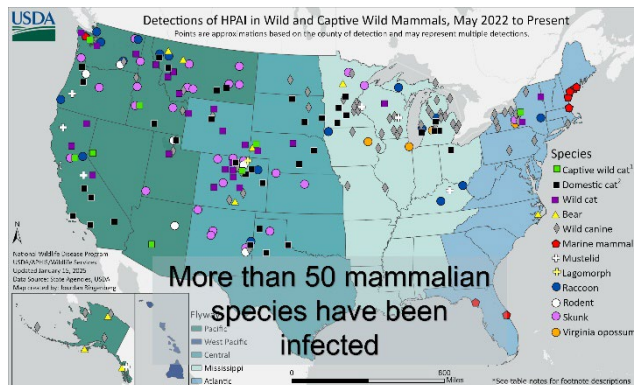
Presentation Summary: The presentation by Dr. Cynda Crawford explores the evolving ecology and impact of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza (bird flu) across the United States. Traditionally, wild waterfowl are the natural hosts of

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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