Health Watch USA[sm] Newsletter

https://www.healthwatchusa.org **Nov. 1, 2026**

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

Activity for the Month of October - Health Watch USA[sm]:
-- 1 Continuing Education Course.
-- 4 Articles.
-- 1 Meeting Presentation
-- 2025 HW USA Conference Videos are Available.
-- 2024 HW USA Conference Videos are Available

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

Health Watch USA[sm] Nov. 1st, 2025 Conference Presentation Videos & Proceedings: Combating Infectious Disease Challenges: https://www.healthwatchusa.org/conference2025/index.html

Health Watch USA[sm] Activities Reports: **2020 2021 2022 2023 2024**



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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-- **Dec. 16, 2026. 7 PM ET.** Michael Patmas, MD, FACP. Entities behind vaccine disinformation

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-- 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
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-- 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

Health Watch USA℠ – Journal of Patient Safety (Peer Reviewed) Article

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REVIEW ARTICLE

OPEN

Combating Infectious Disease Challenges: Have We Gone Twenty Steps Forward or Backward?

Kevin T. Kavanagh, MD, MS, Wilmore Webley, PhD,† Jeannie P. Cimiotti, PhD, RN,‡ Christine Pontus, MS, RN,§ and Lindsay E. Cormier, PhD, MPH‖*

Abstract: The 2025 webinar: "Combating Infectious Disease Challenges: Have We Gone Twenty Steps Forward or Backward?" explores the need for a paradigm shift in public health strategies to address airborne pathogens. Despite growing awareness, many health care systems still underestimate the complexity of airborne transmission, relying on surgical masks for protection against airborne pathogens and on outdated assumptions that aerosol-generating procedures are required to spread them. Evidence shows that pathogens can be aerosolized through Aerosol-Generating-Activities (AGA), which are undertaken every day, such as breathing, talking, and singing, necessitating the use of respirators (eg, N95 masks), airborne infection isolation rooms, and improved indoor air quality. Upgrading HVAC systems and maintaining indoor CO_2 levels below 800 ppm are critical steps toward safer environments. The importance of One Health was highlighted by a discussion of H5N1, including its impact on our food supply and its potential to mutate, which could allow sustained human-to-human transmission. Vaccination remains a cornerstone of infectious disease prevention, credited with saving an estimated 154 million lives globally over the past 5 decades. However, misinformation continues to erode public trust, with nearly 25% of Americans believing the MMR vaccine may cause autism—threatening herd immunity for diseases like measles. The webinar also highlights the importance of elimination strategies at the onset of pandemics. While such approaches were effective against MERS and SARS-CoV-1, they failed against SARS-CoV-2. A failure associated with implementation delays and insufficient infrastructure. This webinar underscores the need for evidence-based interventions, public education, and systemic reform to better prepare for future infectious disease threats.

Key Words: aerosolization, transmission through the air, COVID-19, measles, masks, N95, bacteriophages, MRSA, MMR, autism, vaccines, aerosols, airborne

(*J Patient Saf* 2026;00:000–000)

From the *From the Health Watch USA; †University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst; ‡Emory University, Atlanta, GA; §Massachusetts Nurses Association, Canton, MA; and ‖University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY.

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K.T.K.: conceptualization. K.T.K. and W.W.: writing original draft. C.P., L.E.C., W.W., and K.T.K.: editing and reviewing. K.T.K., W.W., L.E.C., and C.P.: resources. K.T.K. and L.E.C.: software.

The authors disclose no conflict of interest.

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DOI: 10.1097/PTS.0000000000001605

The evolving landscape of infectious diseases necessitates a fundamental shift in our public health strategies. Emerging and re-emerging pathogens, coupled with varying host and population immunologic susceptibility, are part of an evolving landscape of infectious diseases that necessitate a shift in our public health strategies. This is complicated by the detrimental impact of politicization and disinformation, which collectively undermine the effectiveness of public health systems. This confluence of factors is approaching a critical inflection point that could cause profound societal disruption. One of the primary objectives of the 2025 webinar, "Combating Infectious Disease Challenges: Have We Gone Twenty Steps Forward or Backward?" was to convene experts from multiple disciplines to discuss current evidence, emerging hypotheses, and practical public health strategies. Eleven experts from 4 nations (Table 1) convened in August 2025 for the annual Health Watch USA Webinar Conference to discuss evidence-based strategies to advance public health. References supporting the presenter's recommendations are included in the presentation slide PDFs and the conference reference page, all of which can be downloaded from https://www.healthwatchusa.org/conference2025/index.html. Table 1 contains links to the presentations on YouTube.

GROWING THREATS

Bacterial and viral pathogens are no longer future threats but are currently active agents of widespread morbidity, contributing to increased infections and societal disruption over the past decade.

Initially, the surge in postpandemic infections was largely attributed to the concept of "Immune Debt" —a hypothesized consequence of reduced pathogen exposure during the COVID-19 pandemic. This framework, first introduced by Cohen et al,[1] posited that diminished immune stimulation led to increased susceptibility to pathogen exposure. However, the persistent and escalating incidence of non-COVID-19 infections suggests that immune debt alone may not fully account for the observed trends. An emerging, nonexclusive mechanism termed "Immune Theft" proposes that immune dysfunction, potentially induced by viral infections, plays a significant role in postpandemic vulnerability.[2] For example, measles cases in the United States have reached their highest levels in decades and are associated with immune amnesia, characterized by the loss of immunologic memory.[3] Even mild to moderate COVID-19 infections have been shown to cause immune dysregulation lasting up to 8 months,[4] and are linked to reactivation of latent viruses such as Epstein-Barr virus[5] and Varicella Zoster.[6] In 2023, cases of *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* infections surged to levels 9 times higher

Combating Infectious Disease Challenges: Have We Gone Twenty Steps Forward or Backward?

This commentary explores the need for a paradigm shift in public health strategies to address airborne pathogens. Despite growing awareness, many healthcare systems still underestimate the complexity of airborne transmission, relying on surgical masks for protection against pathogens that spread through the air, and outdated assumptions that aerosol-generating procedures are required to spread airborne pathogens. Evidence shows that pathogens can be aerosolized through Aerosol Generating Activities (AGA) which are undertaken every day, such as breathing, talking, and singing, necessitating the use of respirators (e.g., N95 masks), airborne infection isolation rooms, and improved indoor air quality. Upgrading HVAC systems and maintaining indoor CO_2 levels below 800 ppm are critical steps toward safer environments.

The importance of One Health was highlighted by discussing H5N1 and its impact on our food supply and its potential to mutate, possibly allowing sustained human-to-human transmission.

Vaccination remains a cornerstone of infectious disease prevention, credited with saving an estimated 154 million lives globally over the past five decades. However, misinformation continues to erode public trust, with nearly 25% of Americans believing the MMR vaccine may cause autism—threatening herd immunity for diseases like measles.

The webinar also highlights the importance of elimination strategies at the onset of pandemics. While such approaches were effective against MERS and SARS-CoV-1, they failed against SARS-CoV-2. A failure associated with implementation delays and insufficient infrastructure. This webinar underscores the need for evidence-based interventions, public education, and systemic reform to better prepare for future infectious disease threats. Journal of Patient Safety. Oct. 23, 2026.
https://www.ovid.com/jnls/journalpatientsafety/fulltext/10.1097/pts.0000000000001605~combating-infectious-disease-challenges-have-we-gone-twenty



Armageddon by Design: AI, Human Folly, and the Future of Civilization

Four Main Points:

1. Declining critical thinking and social cohesion threaten society.
2. Climate change demands practical action despite political disagreement.
3. AI enables autonomous warfare and biological-weapons development.
4. International regulation and mandatory safeguards are urgently needed.

As AI is further developed and its connections with our society are increased, AI might, in the future, be able to implement human extinction. However, the immediate concern is how AI is being used by humans. International cooperation and mandatory safeguards are desperately needed. AI can either be society's greatest achievement or the cause of a societal catastrophe beyond description, the choice is ours to make. President Trump has stated "whoever wins AI. Wins." However, in the realm of robotic warfare, the United States has given away some of our premier AI robotic capabilities. Boston Dynamics, the leading robotic research corporation with their world-renowned dog robot, Spot, and its military counterpart, Ghost Robotics, have been sold to South Korean corporations. It makes little sense for our nation to be developing AI warfare capabilities and at the same time selling our manufacturing capabilities for delivery platforms to other countries. Oct. 26, 2026 Linked In article.
https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/armageddon-design-ai-human-folly-future-civilization-kevin-kavanagh-bukie/



Suspected Plague Case in Russia: What Infection Preventionists Should Know

The Black Death of the Middle Ages may be returning in Russia with a vengeance…or maybe not. However, whatever the pathogen is, it appears to be spreading and has the Russians on high alert. Here is what has been reported (view ICT Article).... Let's pray this pathogen does not reach our shores, but if it does, we must be prepared and not repeat the mistakes we made during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic; instead, we must apply the knowledge we have learned. Infection Control Today. Oct. 7, 2026. https://www.infectioncontroltoday.com/view/suspected-plague-case-in-russia-what-infection-preventionists-should-know



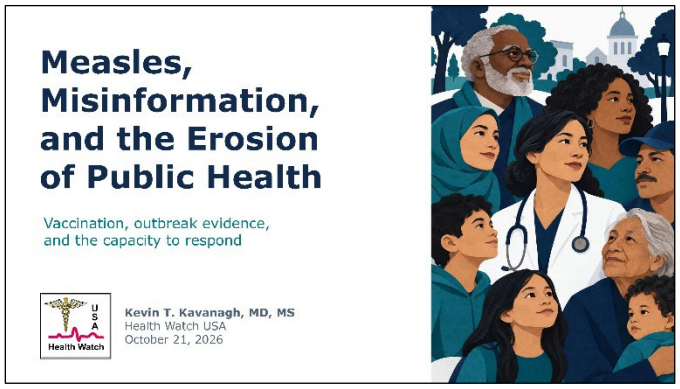
Guinea-Bissau Hepatitis B Vaccine Trial: Birth-Dose Concerns and Research Ethics

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We are hearing about a Tuskegee II experiment, a notation making many cringe. Unfortunately, this is not hyperbole or being disrespectful to past black American victims, this is what may happen. However, this time the experiment is not giving available treatments to patients having chronic syphilis, but instead withholding Hepatitis B vaccinations at birth to innocent black infants in the West African country of Guinea-Bissau. The goal of the birth dose of the Hepatitis B vaccine is the elimination of this disease. We have the tools to do this and are making advances in many countries, let's not dial back our efforts by decades because we want to investigate non-existent issues, voiced by non-scientific and vaccine conspiracy theorists." Infection Control Today. Oct. 20, 2026. https://www.infectioncontroltoday.com/view/guinea-bissau-hepatitis-b-vaccine-trial-birth-dose-concerns-research-ethics

Health Watch USA^{sm} – Meeting Presentations

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Measles, Misinformation, and the Erosion of Public Health

Dr. Kevin Kavanagh, MD, MS asserts that rising measles cases in the United States reflect declining vaccination coverage, misinformation, and weakened public health capacity—not primarily illegal immigration. Although international travel can introduce measles, sustained transmission depends on local susceptibility. Herd immunity requires about 95% vaccination coverage, yet U.S. and Kentucky rates are approximately 92% and 91% respectively, with substantial gaps among counties and clustered communities.

Two MMR doses are about 97% effective, while one dose is about 93% effective in preventing measles infections. Infants are especially vulnerable between six and twelve months, after maternal antibodies decline but before routine vaccination. Measles can cause pneumonia, encephalitis, death, and "immune amnesia," which weakens protection against other infections.

The presentation rejects claims linking MMR vaccination to autism, noting that the original study was retracted, and numerous studies have found no association. Nevertheless, polling suggests many Americans still believe the vaccine causes autism or is more dangerous than measles.

Recent outbreaks and the return of other infectious diseases highlight shortcomings in surveillance, inspections, staffing, reporting, and prevention. The recommended response is clear clinical communication, stronger federal and state reporting, collection of comprehensive local vaccination data, targeted outreach to communities with low vaccination coverage, and renewed investment in public health staffing and outbreak-response capacity. Health Watch USA Meeting. Oct. 21, 2026. YouTube Video: https://youtu.be/NAGI1tgXEcg



Upcoming Meetings.

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Nov. 11, 2026. 7 PM ET: J.B. Branch, Artificial Intelligence's impact on government and our workforce.

Dec. 16, 2026. 7 PM ET. Michael Patmas, MD, FACP. Entities behind vaccine disinformation

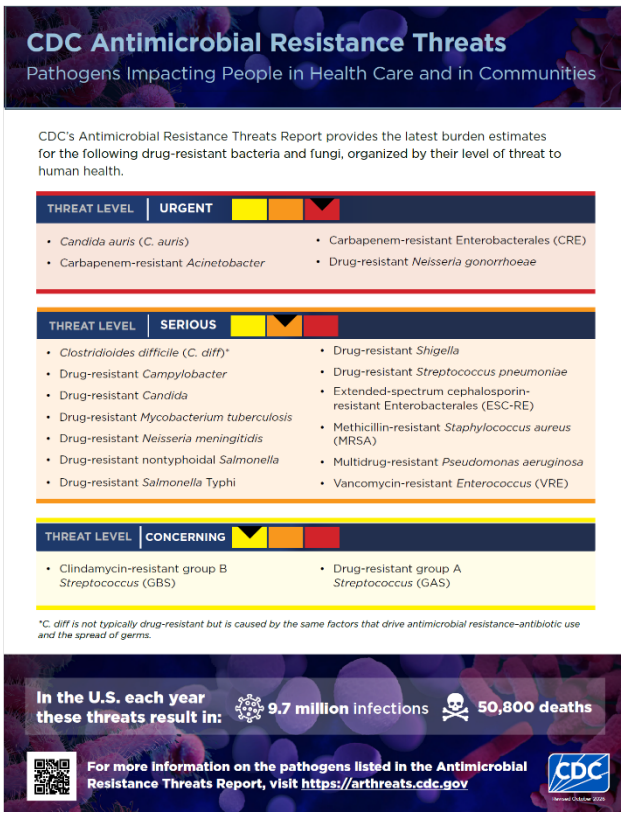
Space is limited. To attend future meetings, send an email to kavanagh.ent@gmail.com

Health Watch USA℠ – Articles of Interest

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"I just want to say to all of you cowards out there - don't be such a chicken squat. Get out there and get your shot," - Dolly Parton
https://www.theguardian.com/music/2020/nov/17/dolly-parton-partly-funded-moderna-covid-vaccine-research

CDC 2026 Antimicrobial Resistance Threats Report

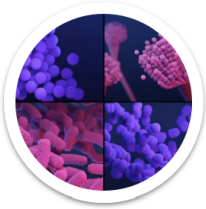


9.7 million Infections. 50,800 Deaths

"Antimicrobial resistance (AR), also known as drug resistance, is an urgent global public health threat. AR happens when pathogens (germs) like bacteria and fungi develop the ability to defeat the drugs designed to kill them, resulting in infections that can be difficult or impossible to treat. If antibiotics and antifungals lose their effectiveness, then we lose the ability to treat infections and control public health threats."

"At CDC, we know that high-quality data are essential to help guide policy, investments, and interventions to combat AR. The Antimicrobial Resistance Threats Report provides burden estimates for a list of bacterial and fungal pathogens categorized by level of threat to human health in the United States—urgent, serious, and concerning—and the overall domestic burden estimate for these threats. In addition, the report includes a Watch List of pathogens whose full burden is not yet understood in the United States. These pathogens are being monitored and may be included as urgent, serious, or concerning threats in the future." https://arpsp.cdc.gov/artr

Pathogens by Threat Level



All Pathogens

List of bacteria and fungi threatening human health.



Urgent

These pathogens are public health threats that require urgent and aggressive action.



Serious

These pathogens are public health threats that require prompt and sustained action.



Concerning

These pathogens are public health threats that require careful monitoring and prevention action.



Watch List

These pathogens are being monitored as potential threats, as their full burden is not yet understood.









Interesting quote by Chinese Author Cixin Liu in the 2015 novel "Three Body Problem": "To effectively contain a civilization's development and disarm it across such a long span of time, there is only one way: kill its science."

https://bookquoters.com/book/the-three-body-problem

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It looks like Russia and China approved the pandemic declaration, but we (the United States) did not.

WHO General Assembly adopts pandemic declaration, but not by consensus

"The General Assembly on Monday adopted a political declaration on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, by 153 in favour to three against (Argentina, Israel and United States) with two abstentions (New Zealand and Paraguay). "Chile's representative summed up one prevailing view, saying that "no country, no matter how big it might be or how prepared it might be, can alone address a threat that knows no borders."" "The declaration is political and non-binding. It calls for stronger national, regional and international cooperation, guided by science, equity and respect for human rights, and it welcomes last year's landmark adoption of the World Health Organization (WHO) Pandemic Agreement." "
https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/10/1168581

A Controversial Hepatitis B Vaccine Study Championed by RFK Jr. Is Axed After Widespread Backlash

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"After months of reporting by Rolling Stone, a trial declared 'unethical' by WHO will not move forward"
https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/hepatitis-b-study-will-not-proceed-1235646304/

A Lab-Leak Story You Haven't Heard

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. believes that RSV originated in a government science experiment.
"Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. seems to be intent on spreading the word about RSV: He brought up the virus during interviews on both CNN and Fox News in August. He could have used those appearances to remind viewers about the RSV vaccine, which the FDA first approved in 2023 and the CDC recommends for older adults and for women in the later stages of pregnancy during the fall and winter. Instead, Kennedy made two false statements. First, on CNN, he called RSV "the biggest killer of kids in this country today." (According to the CDC, it isn't; cancer claims more children's lives.) His other whopper was weirder: In both appearances, he blamed RSV on a scientific experiment gone wrong, saying on Fox that it "came from a laboratory" and on CNN that it came from gain-of-function experiments, or something like them."
https://www.theatlantic.com/health/2026/10/rsv-kennedy-conspiracy-theory-lab-leak/688998/
We are entering into an AI versus human world. Now Wikipedia is being filled with AI Agent content. Safeguards for AI are imperative.

Rogue AI agents have gone too far now that they've infiltrated Wikipedia

"Fair enough if you shrugged at AI agents hacking into government websites and corporate systems. But now it appears that these rogue models have gone after something much nearer and dearer: Wikipedia. On Monday, the Wikimedia Foundation, the nonprofit organization which operates Wikipedia, announced that, after conducting its own investigation, it "can confirm" that it's discovered "rogue" OpenAI agent activity on its platforms." https://www.msn.com/en-us/technology/artificial-intelligence/rogue-ai-agents-have-gone-too-far-now-that-they-ve-infiltrated-wikipedia/ar-AA2dKeI5

A.I. Is 'Better Informed' Than Doctors, Kennedy Tells Industry-Backed MAHA Summit

"Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who has frequently advised Americans not to trust medical experts, said on Tuesday that artificial intelligence can offer patients "a second opinion that is much better informed than any doctor in the country" and has the power to "free us from medical tyranny."
https://www.nytimes.com/2026/09/29/health/maha-summit-kennedy-vance.html

6 physician groups refute RFK Jr. claim that AI is 'better informed than any doctor'

"Six physician medical groups are speaking out after HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. described AI as offering "a second opinion that is much better informed than any doctor in the country," and has the power to "free us from medical tyranny." "

"At the MAHA Summit in Washington, D.C., where Mr. Kennedy made the comments, he also claimed that OpenAI CEO Sam Altman told him physicians would be committing malpractice if they diagnosed a patient or prescribed treatment without first consulting AI. Mr. Kennedy framed AI as a tool patients could use to challenge guidance from public officials and medical experts. "
https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/quality/hospital-physician-relationships/6-physician-groups-refute-rfk-jr-claim-that-ai-is-better-informed-than-any-doctor/

Warning issued after 'first instance of large-scale AI interference' in government consultation

“Artificial intelligence bots were responsible for over three quarters of responses to a government consultation regarding plans to create a smoke-free generation and restrict vape sales, a study has found. According to the analysis, these submissions were "overwhelmingly targeted" at opposing proposed restrictions on disposable e-cigarettes. For the study, published in the journal Tobacco Control, experts at the University of Edinburgh examined published consultation reports as well as Freedom of Information request data submitted to the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).”

“It found that 118,756 responses were submitted to the consultation. However, DHSC identified 76% – more than 90,000 – as fraudulent using bot-detection methods.”
https://www.newsbreak.com/share/4970806550344-warning-issued-after-first-instance-of-large-scale-ai-interference-in-government-consultation?

CDC Issues Emergency Response for Florida Dengue Outbreak

— This is the eighth emergency activation of the year

"Florida is in the midst of its largest dengue outbreak in decades, with 745 cases this year; 425 of those have been locally acquired, and most are concentrated in the Tampa area. That figure marks the largest dengue outbreak in the continental U.S. since 1935. "Given the widespread presence of Aedes aegypti mosquitoes and with recent hurricane-related rainfall, continued domestic transmission remains a concern," Chris Braden, MD, acting director of the CDC's National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases (NCEZID), wrote in an email that was shared with MedPage Today. Braden acknowledged the extraordinary number of responses managed by NCEZID staff this year. "I know many of you are already supporting active responses across the agency, and I am deeply grateful for your continued agility and dedication," he wrote. Other emergency responses included Cyclospora, Ebola, measles, hantavirus, and New World screwworm outbreaks, along with the World Cup safety activation and the Potomac River wastewater spill activation near Washington, D.C."
https://www.medpagetoday.com/infectiousdisease/generalinfectiousdisease/123530



Health Watch USA℠ – 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 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.infectioncontroltoday.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 USA℠ – 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 USA[sm] – 2025 Webinar Presentations

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2025 Webinar Introduction & Science Behind Masking:



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

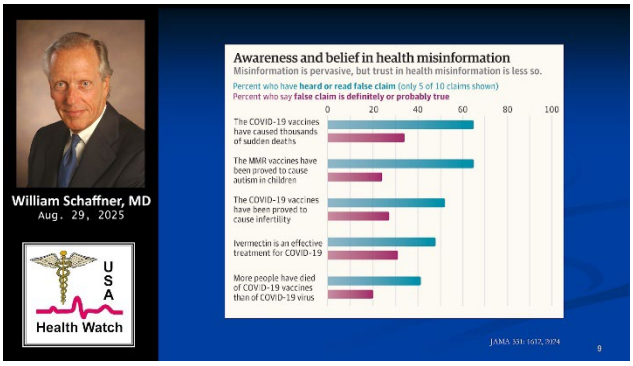
Associated Infection Control Today Article: How Misinformation Tries to Debunk the Science Behind Masking https://www.infectioncontroltoday.com/view/how-misinformation-tries-discredit-science-behind-masking

Key Points from Webinar Introduction

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

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Communications and pandemic mitigation strategies—Health Watch USA 2025



William Schaffner, MD discusses that dealing with vaccine hesitancy, such as a patient's reluctance to receive a flu shot, requires more than simply offering facts—it necessitates empathy, validation, and a focus on building trust. When a patient expresses uncertainty about vaccination, the healthcare provider's response should never be surprise or judgment. Instead, it is vital to acknowledge and validate the patient's concerns, maintaining open, supportive dialogue. Asking patients to share their specific worries and responding with understanding helps ease anxiety and fosters a sense of partnership. Providers are encouraged to normalize healthy behaviors by sharing relatable examples, such as mentioning that they and their families are vaccinated, and highlighting

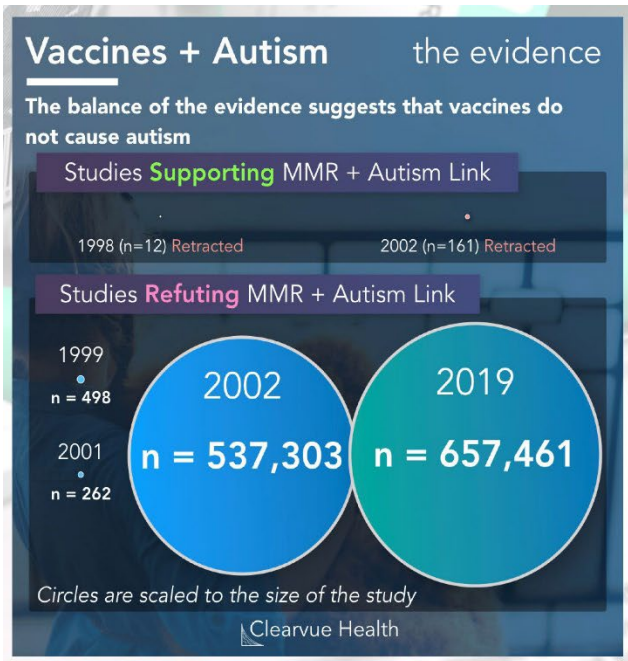
that most people in the community do the same. This approach leverages social norms and comfort to promote positive health actions. Even if a patient remains hesitant, it's important not to argue, but to accept their reluctance and assure them the conversation will continue in the future. Effective communication about vaccines also involves keeping messages clear, fact-based, and accessible. Healthcare professionals should be honest about the benefits and limitations of vaccines, offering reassurance and emphasizing the goal of preventing serious disease. Ultimately, how patients feel during these interactions—respected, understood, and cared for—has a lasting impact. The role of the healthcare provider is not only to impart knowledge but to nourish trust, serving as both teacher and caregiver in the journey toward better health outcomes. Health Watch USA[sm] Webinar Aug. 29, 2025. View Presentation Video: https://youtu.be/h45wnmG79xI

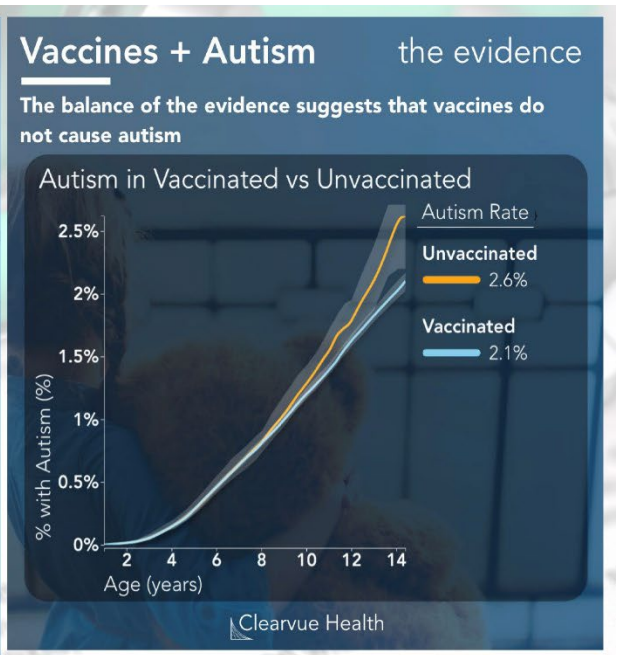
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Measles 50 years later

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 USA[sm] 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.lon g

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

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



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

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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



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.

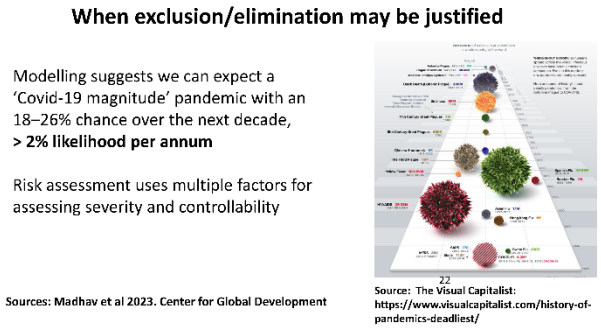
Clinical development has been slow because producing stable, pure phage preparations requires them to be grown on their host bacteria and thoroughly purified to avoid immune reactions. Most phage treatments in the United States have been used compassionately in critically ill patients, but rigorous placebo-controlled 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 USA[sm] webinar Aug. 29, 2025. View Presentation Video: https://youtu.be/CQmpXcIiJg8

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Why elimination should be the default strategy for future severe pandemics



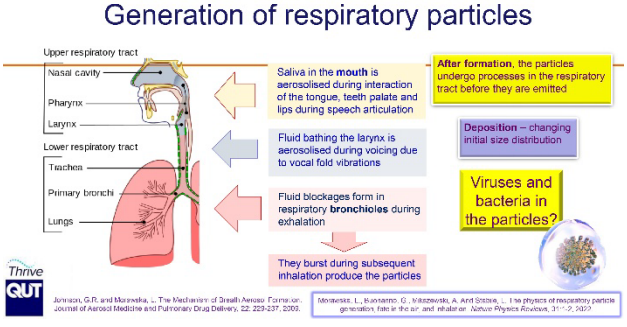
In this presentation, Professor Michael Baker, a key figure in New Zealand's COVID-19 response, discusses the country's elimination strategy against the pandemic. A public health physician and epidemiologist at the University of Otago, Baker highlights that a clear strategy is crucial for effective pandemic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

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

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

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Understanding and Reducing the Spread of Respiratory Pathogens Through The Air



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

Dr. Morawska highlighted historical resistance to recognizing airborne transmission, noting that scientific consensus and interdisciplinary collaboration were essential in shifting global perspectives, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

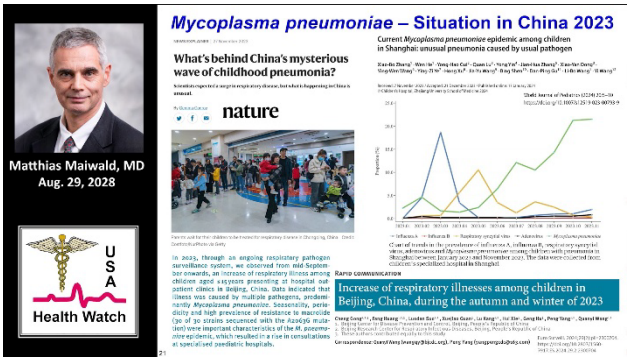
She cited the need for robust ventilation far beyond merely opening windows, as mechanical ventilation systems significantly reduce infection rates. A study in Italy demonstrated lower COVID-19 cases in classrooms equipped with mechanical ventilation compared to those without.

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

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



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



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

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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 USA[sm] webinar on Aug. 29, 2025. View Presentation Video: https://youtu.be/jRwadwS31T0



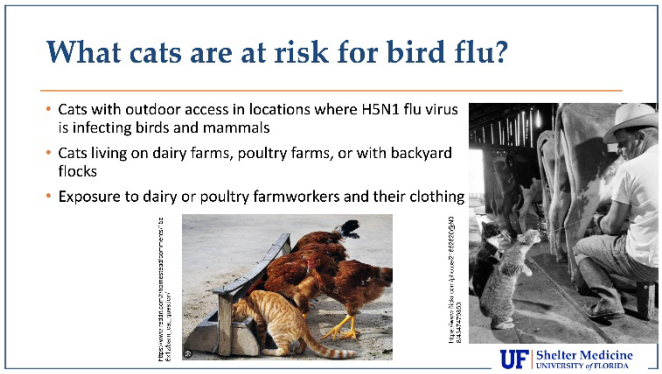
Bird Flu, the risks and prevention of a future pandemic

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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 USA[sm] webinar Aug. 29, 2025. View Video: https://youtu.be/GykR462luJQ



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

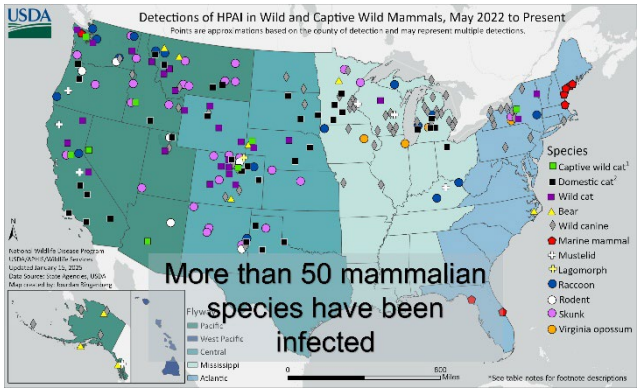
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Dr. Cynda Crawford, DMV, PhD discusses H5N1 or "Bird Flu" and its impact on domestic cats, poultry and dairy cattle at the 2025 Health Watch USA[sm] webinar: "Combating Infectious Disease Challenges."

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

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

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



Following H5 Influenza As It Moves Through North American Food Animals

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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 USA[sm] Webinar Aug. 29, 2025. View Presentation Video: https://youtu.be/SALHVe_aAJ4

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