Trump attacks Dr. Fauci for cautioning against the premature opening of the country

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14 May 2020

Dr. Anthony Fauci's testimony at Tuesday's Senate hearing cut across the bipartisan efforts to prematurely open the country, sending a cold shudder down the spines of stock markets, which saw the Dow-Jones Industrial Average drop more than 300 points.

A leading figure in the White House coronavirus task force, Fauci cautioned senators that a rapid reopening of the country could lead to a dramatic resurgence in cases requiring returning to a second lockdown. He cautioned that to expect a vaccine or some form of antiviral to be available by the time schools and colleges are due to open in August and September is wishful thinking.

In no uncertain terms, he said, "There is a real risk that you will trigger an outbreak that you may not be able to control, which in fact, paradoxically, will set you back, not only leading to some suffering and death that could be avoided, but could even set you back on the road to try to get economic recovery."

On Wednesday, in an attempt at damage control, President Trump went on the offensive against his own widely respected infectious disease expert. "He wants to play all sides of the equations," the president said, when asked by Fox Business Network about Fauci's comments. "I was surprised by his answer. To me, it's not an acceptable answer, especially when it comes to schools… we have to get the schools open, we have to get our country open, we have to open our country."

Trump faces further fallout today as Dr. Rick Bright, the ousted former director of the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, an important unit of the Department of Health and Human Services, is set to tell Congress that the White House was utterly unprepared for the coronavirus pandemic when it hit the country, and unwilling to listen to the warnings of disease experts like himself.

In prepared testimony obtained by CNN, Dr. Bright wrote, "Our window of opportunity is closing. If we fail to develop a coordinated national response, based on science, I fear the pandemic will get far worse and be prolonged, causing unprecedented illness and fatalities. Without clear planning and implementation of the steps that other experts and I have outlined, 2020 will be the darkest winter in modern history."

It has been just over four months since the world first heard of the novel coronavirus, tentatively called 2019-nCoV, later dubbed SARS-CoV-2. The disease caused by the virus, COVID-19, has become firmly rooted in the global lexicon. In this short period, the world has seen almost 300,000 deaths and over 4.4 million cases, with 2.5 million currently infected patients. The devastation being wrought by the pandemic far exceeds the gruesome figures cited. The impact on all economic and social life on the planet is massive. It requires an urgent international response to stem the impending catastrophes of unemployment, hunger, disease, mass poverty and war.

At Wednesday's World Health Organization (WHO) press briefing, Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreysus said that inequality is driving the COVID-19 pandemic, not only by causing significant loss of life, but by threatening the progress made specifically in the prevention and treatment of childhood diseases, malarial infections and HIV. WHO health statistics published yesterday demonstrate that the world will not meet the sustainable developmental goals, a collection of 17 global goals designed to improve the health of the people on the planet and intended to be achieved by the year 2030, and will be further thrown off track by COVID-19.

"The world has not done enough to deliver on the promise of health for all," Ghebreysus said. "The best defense against this outbreak and other health threats is preparedness. Health systems and health securities are two sides of the same coin. If we don't invest in both, we will face not just health consequences, but the social, economic and political fallout that we are already experiencing in this pandemic."

Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, the chief scientist of the World Health Organization, offered a sobering assessment of the pandemic on the second day of a live-streamed three-day global conference co-hosted by the *Financial Times* on the world's response to COVID-19. She stated that many factors would have to be considered to determine how long the world would be facing the challenges of coping with the pandemic. These include a global response to contain the virus, the continued threat that it poses, and whether a vaccine is eventually developed.

"I would say in a four-to-five-year time frame we could be looking at controlling this," she said. "There is no crystal ball… the pandemic could potentially get worse... A vaccine seems for

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now the best way out, agreed all the participants, but these come with considerable caveats, and one concern they raised was that if the virus mutated sufficiently, the vaccine may stop working."

Additional issues raised included the scaling of these vaccines and their equitable distribution. Dr. Peter Piot, director of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, corroborated this assessment, adding that in the meantime "we will have to find a way, as societies, to live with this and change from lockdowns to more granular, targeted types of interventions."

In a nefarious attempt to "fix" the horrific number of US fatalities standing now at 85,000, President Trump is attempting to strongarm the CDC to change its methodology for counting COVID-19 deaths. His task force chief, Dr. Deborah Birx, has petitioned to exclude those who may have died from COVID-19 but did not have confirmation by testing and those with COVID-19 that may have died from unrelated factors. The *Washington Post* wrote last week, "Birx and others were frustrated with the CDC's antiquated system for tracking virus data, which they worried were inflating some statistics—such as mortality rate and case count—by as much as 25 percent." Birx was absent at the Senate hearing addressed by Fauci.

Bob Anderson, the CDC's mortality statistics chief, in an interview with the *Daily Beast*, defended its methodology for determining deaths due to COVID-19, saying, "We're almost certainly underestimating the number of deaths." Dr. Fauci also gave his assurance at Tuesday's senate subcommittee hearing that actual numbers are much higher than those Trump has sought to discredit.

According to Anderson, the CDC has two parallel tracking systems to follow the COVID-19 deaths being reported. It uses data sent to it by state health departments, and from the information it gets through a death certificate digital coding system. These two numbers remain consistent, though the death certificate count will usually lag from two to eight weeks. Disruption in this process would lead to a significant undercounting, he said.

A report released this week by the CDC notes that as of May 2, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene had confirmed 13,831 deaths and 5,048 probable COVID-19 deaths, but had not included deaths among residents who could not get tested, had false-negative tests, or where the treating physician did not see the viral infection as the cause of death.

The CDC wrote, "The 5,293 excess deaths not identified as confirmed or probable COVID-19 associated deaths might have been directly or indirectly attributable to the pandemic."

In his sociopathic attempt to force a premature opening of the country, Trump has no qualms robbing these victims of the dignity of the truth about the premature cause of their death.

Adding insult to injury, NBC News reported that the White House is refusing to disclose a coronavirus task force report that several metropolitan and smaller communities throughout the nations are seeing spikes of COVID-19 cases. At Monday's White House briefing, Trump declared that "throughout the country, the numbers are coming down rapidly."

Yet, per the report, the top ten areas saw surges of 72.4 percent or more over seven days compared to the previous week. These areas included Nashville, Tennessee; Des Moines, Iowa and Amarillo, Texas. The small town of Central City, Kentucky had 467 confirmed cases, including 356 inmates of the Green River Correctional Complex.

The United States saw more than 20,000 new cases of COVID-19 and over 1,600 deaths in a 24-hour period. There remains a massive burden of infection rooted in US communities. One-third of all US deaths have been attributed to nursing home residents.

According to Mike Ryan, chief of emergencies at the WHO, "If you reopen in the presence of a high degree of virus transmission, then that transmission may accelerate. If that virus transmission accelerates and you don't have the systems to detect it, it will be days or weeks before you know something has gone wrong, and by the time that happens, you are back into a situation when your only response is another lockdown… We should not be waiting to see if the opening of lockdowns has worked by counting the cases in the ICU or the bodies in the morgue--that is not the way to know something has gone wrong."

Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, in an interview with the *New York Times*, offered the most concise and candid appraisal of the administration's objective, when he said, "I really believe that once America opens up, it'll be very hard for America to ever lock down again."

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