

Pandemic continues to kill in America, while the ruling elite squabbles over mandates

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14 October 2021

There is barely a mention of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States any more, other than the assertions by the mainstream press that the worst is now behind us or announcements of new approvals of vaccinations. The recent declines have been celebrated even though the daily infection rates remain above most of the previous peaks, and new waves—and variants—could well arise.

The pandemic has had and continues to have a massive impact on the population regardless of the media's silence on the matter. There have been more than 45.4 million reported COVID-19 infections during the pandemic. The reported number of COVID-related deaths is approaching 740,000. Over the last three months, 10 million infections were registered with 114,000 deaths, demonstrating the virulence of the Delta variant despite more than half the population being fully vaccinated.

However, even these figures are a significant underreporting of the true calamity. According to data provided by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation's model of excess COVID-19 deaths, the death toll stands at a horrific 1.33 million lives lost over the span of 18 months. Nearly 300,000 of these deaths occurred during the last wave of infections.

The discrepancy between the reported COVID deaths and the excess deaths estimated on the basis of COVID-19 models is staggering, and yet there is not a mention of it in the bourgeoisie press and by the political establishment.

And despite these horrific developments, instead of employing any significant public health measures to save lives and livelihoods, the message has evolved into mitigate through vaccinations only.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, speaking on ABC's "This Week," provided what passes for caution in the official discourse. He told anchor Jonathan Karl, "We certainly are turning the corner on this particular surge, Jon. But we have experienced over now close to 20 months of surges that go up and then come down, and then go back up again. The way to keep it down, to make that turnaround continue to go down, is to do what we mentioned: get people vaccinated."

Critical modeling of the dynamics of community spread employing various strategies for dealing with the pandemic has shown that vaccinations alone will not stem the tide of infections. The vaccination campaigns have all but stalled, making any stated vaccination goal difficult to achieve. Currently, only 56.6 percent of the population is fully vaccinated, below what would be required even to slow the spread of the highly transmissible Delta variant.

As for eradicating the virus and freeing humanity from this deadly threat, neither of the two camps in bourgeois politics hold out any such prospect.

Placing the discussion into context, even before the last surge in the US this summer, scientists had estimated that combined with infections and vaccines, approximately 83.3 percent of the population had some level of immunity. And yet, the last wave was only second in its destructive force to the winter surge. Without measures in place to curtail the spread of infection, the virus will continue to spark new fires across the country, including a likely new surge accompanying the colder weather that is imminent in the Northern US states.

Presently, the pandemic is rippling through dispersed populations of rural regions for whom the lack of infrastructure and access to health care are playing havoc. A new study from the University of Iowa College of Public Health found COVID-19 death rates in rural regions were double those reported in urban areas.

On Wednesday, Alaska saw 18 more people hospitalized for COVID-19, bringing the total to 204. Cases also doubled overnight with 1,220 new infections. The state continues to lead in infection rates. Earlier in the month the state health officials activated a "crisis standard of care" policy across 20 hospitals, which means critical life-sustaining care is being rationed to those deemed best fit to survive. For instance, at Providence Alaska Medical Center in Anchorage, treatment for a 70-year-old woman on a ventilator and dialysis machine was terminated to free up the machine for a 48-year-old man, according to CNBC. Both patients, however, passed away.

The current surge in hospitalizations in Montana has persisted. This week the state broke the 2,000 mark for the first time during the pandemic as the figure rose to 2,227 COVID-19 cases on Tuesday, breaking the previous record of 1,456 on October 4, 2020. Wyoming and West Virginia are experiencing similar surges of cases.

But more densely populated states are also suffering anew. Michigan has witnessed a resurgence of the infection. The state's health department reported on Wednesday that there were 8,671 newly confirmed COVID-19 cases and 110 deaths over the span of just two days. Hospital emergency rooms are filled with patients lying on stretchers in the crowded hallways left unattended from staffing shortages. However, many are also there not because of COVID-19 but other ailments that have been long neglected, but which are now forcing people to overcome their understandable reluctance to seek hospital treatment.

Dr. Brad Uren, an emergency medicine professor at the University of Michigan College of Emergency Physicians, told the *Detroit Free Press*, "We're back to pre-COVID volumes, but also have the added burden of the COVID patients and the sort of backlog of patients that have been deferring some of their care over the last year."

Wisconsin has seen cases peak across the state, with the seven-day average having reached over 2,600 cases. As schools there ended even mitigation policies, the number of infections among children has soared, contributing to the present dire situation. Deaths have begun to track upwards again. According to the Wisconsin Hospital Association, more than 1,170 people are admitted to the hospitals in the state with 310 in intensive care units.

Though the number of new cases nationally has been declining, with the seven-day average now a little over 91,000 per day, the death toll remains high, with more than 1,900 people dying each day. There are also indications that the decline in national COVID-19 cases is slowing, which has ominous implications as the country is heading into winter with the added burden of the flu season.

Though full vaccination status for the elderly has reached 80 percent, they were also the first to be vaccinated, meaning their immunity to the coronavirus is most likely to have weakened. The continuing drive to return to pre-pandemic norms means that this age group faces renewed dangers of the full implementation of the "learning to live with the virus" policy. Though one in 450 people has died from COVID-19 in the United States, COVID-19 deaths among the elderly are now at one in 100, highlighting the dangers for this age group. Thus far, more than a half million people aged 65 or older have died from coronavirus in America.

Despite these grim statistics, the Biden administration is

pushing ahead with a policy focused almost exclusively on vaccinations, while other public health measures go by the boards. Biden signed an executive order implementing emergency temporary standards (ETS) that would force companies with more than 100 employees to mandate vaccination or regular testing. Once it goes into effect, the ETS would impact around 80 million workers, half the US workforce. Yesterday, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) submitted the text of the new vaccine rule for large employers to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

Texas Governor Greg Abbott has taken the offensive against the vaccine mandate push by signing an executive order on Monday that would prohibit companies and organizations from enforcing a COVID-19 mandate on workers. The order states, "No entity in Texas can compel receipt of a COVID-19 vaccine by any individual, including any employee or a consumer, who objects to such vaccination for any reason of personal conscience, based on a religious belief, including prior recovery from COVID-19." However, as many of these corporate "entities" operate across multiple states, it will only further exacerbate the global supply chain issues and the chaotic economic situation as companies have to determine which rules they will abide by.

The vaccinated governor presides over a state with one of the highest COVID-19 death tolls. Close to 69,000 people have died thus far, and more than 200 are still dying each day. Assuredly, these decisions are driven by personal political ambitions and not based on any moral stance or consideration based on sound scientific advice. In this regard, both the Democrats and Republicans are complicit in the massive number of deaths caused by their policies.

As Biden remarked last month during a White House speech urging large companies to enforce vaccination mandates on their labor force, "While America is in much better shape than it was seven months ago when I took office, I need to tell you a second fact: we're in a tough stretch and it could last a while." The president said more than he had probably intended.



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