

CDC, Reuters suppress warnings about airborne transmission of monkeypox

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On Friday, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the news outlet Reuters escalated the attacks against those warning that the deadly monkeypox virus can be transmitted through the air. In a “fact check” article published by Reuters, the news outlet claims that social media posts exposing unexplained changes made in late May to the CDC’s guidelines on monkeypox, are “missing the context” of the changes.

The Reuters piece was published after Dana Parish, an author and advocate for those suffering from Long COVID, wrote a series of tweets on July 30 showing that CDC guidelines have been “scrubbed” of clear references to the danger of airborne transmission of monkeypox.

Parish compared the CDC Yellow Book, which is published to provide health and disease information for those traveling internationally, to the agency’s current Monkeypox FAQ, which present conflicting guidelines. The Yellow Book, published every two years and most recently in 2020, states, “monkeypox spread from person to person is principally respiratory; contact with infectious skin lesions or scabs is another, albeit less common, means of person-to-person spread.”

In contrast, the most recent CDC guidance claims that “direct contact” is the primary mode of transmission. “Respiratory secretions,” a term which is not defined or explained, is listed as a secondary mode of transmission at best. To reinforce its assertions, the CDC also writes that, “In the current monkeypox outbreak, the virus is spreading primarily through close personal contact,” including sex.

The conception that monkeypox is primarily transmitted sexually has been massively promoted since the monkeypox pandemic began in early May. The World Health Organization (WHO) and virtually every public health agency of the major capitalist governments have promoted the fact that 98 percent of confirmed cases so far have been among men sexually active with other men. In reality, testing has been largely confined to this demographic with nearly every non-endemic country refusing to conduct widespread testing to trace the extent of the disease among

the entire population. Significantly, in Africa, where monkeypox is endemic in a number of countries and at least 350 cases have been detected this year, 60 percent of all cases are among men and 40 percent have occurred among women.

Historically, airborne transmission has long been recognized as one of the key ways that monkeypox can jump from person to person, and the science of the virus has not changed overnight during the current unprecedented outbreak. A recent preprint article studying this year’s monkeypox outbreak in the United Kingdom showed that “three of four air samples collected” during the study tested positive for monkeypox, indicating that the disease is airborne. In Nigeria, a country where monkeypox outbreaks are more commonplace, their Monkeypox Public Health Response Guidelines have always had “airborne precautions” in place. In July, the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) published an extensive report on monkeypox, which notes that monkeypox can spread through aerosols and recommends that health care workers wear N95 masks for protection.

In an extensive thread defending Parish against the attack by Reuters, anti-COVID advocate Lazarus Long documented numerous sources which have noted the airborne transmission of monkeypox, including multiple screenshots from the CDC’s prior guidance.

Parish commented on the Reuters piece to the *World Socialist Web Site*, noting that “Fact checkers are supposed to use facts, not government hearsay without any data to back it up. The government refused to test women, children, and straight men saying the virus was only spreading among men having sex with men. This doesn’t show a mode of transmission, it shows that one community was tested while others weren’t. If a virus was known to be primarily airborne before the current outbreak, what evidence is there to show that those cases weren’t spread by airborne transmission? Having sex would put these men at close range for a long enough period to have an infectious dose.

“Remember when the government said you’d only catch

COVID if you were around someone for 15 minutes? That was untrue and unsupported, and this all feels too eerily familiar.”

Parish also spoke to the lack of genuine research in the “fact check” article, asking, “Why did Reuters report that the CDC used to explain that respiratory was a primary mode of transmission without showing any evidence that it’s no longer happening? Also, why did Reuters talk about the Department of Homeland Security document without explaining that they’re telling health care workers to use N95s at minimum around Monkeypox patients and that there is mention of airborne spread in that document?”

She added, “Reuters confirmed that up until the current outbreak, the CDC and other experts knew airborne was the primary mode of transmission but have provided no evidence to show it’s not or an explanation as to how a virus can suddenly no longer have airborne transmission, especially as cases are spreading so fast.”

Parish also noted that Reuters only contacted the CDC for their article and did not ask her for comment. In other words, attempts are being made to discredit and silence those that argue for the precautionary principle, which demands that the whole arsenal of public health measures be deployed against a deadly viral outbreak which has still many unknown characteristics.

The timing of the Reuters piece suggests there are a variety of high level discussions within the US state regarding its response to the monkeypox pandemic. The same day the “fact check” was published, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized the use of the Jynneos smallpox vaccine for children under 18 years old who were potentially exposed to monkeypox at a daycare center in Illinois, despite the absence of clinical trials to test the safety and efficacy of the vaccine for this demographic. The move by the FDA suggests that the government is aware that in previous outbreaks, as recorded in the report from Nigeria, “the majority of deaths [occurred] in younger age groups.” The immediate authorization of the Jynneos vaccine stands in stark contrast to the extended delay in granting emergency use authorization to anti-COVID vaccines for children over the past two years.

At the same time, cases among young people are growing. Over the weekend, Florida reported three new cases of monkeypox in children under the age of fourteen, bringing the total number of infections in children in the US to at least eight. There are now over 7,500 cases in the US and nearly 29,000 cases worldwide. The death toll, according to Our World In Data, currently stands at nine.

As with the coronavirus pandemic, the working class as a whole must ask, “What does the government know about the dangers of monkeypox and when did it know it?” It is

increasingly clear that the same backhanded dealings that occurred at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, done in order to ensure the stock market could be propped up at the expense of human lives, are being repeated by withholding the immense dangers of monkeypox from the American and world population.

Nicolas Smit, an expert on airborne transmission and masks, told the WSWS, “The CDC has a record of hiding evidence of airborne transmission from the public and purposefully misleading them to believe it isn’t happening until they are forced to admit it. The CDC admitted to airborne transmission for COVID in January 2020, then told the public for over a year there was no evidence of airborne transmission. The CDC only admitted to airborne transmission a week after the WHO did in May 2021.”

Smit added, “The CDC and President Biden said that once airborne transmission was confirmed, they would recommend airborne PPE like N95s be put into widespread use. But once it happened, they continued to recommend cloth masks and kept a veil of secrecy over superior options like elastomeric respirators.”

Concerns over the airborne transmission of monkeypox are particularly important as schools reopen. Schools, as well as factories, offices and other workplaces, have been shown to be a key vector of transmission for airborne viruses such as the coronavirus and monkeypox. The fact that warnings that monkeypox is airborne are being suppressed suggest that the government is aware of the dangers and attempting to ultimately suppress social opposition to the unchecked spread of a second deadly pandemic virus among children.

“The bottom line is that we need transparency and clear, science-based guidance in order to protect children, their families, teachers, and the broader community,” Parish wrote. “Rather than spend so much energy trying to craft their image by discrediting me and others who have called them out and are rightfully concerned, the CDC and all public health officials should be laser focused on understanding and mitigating the outbreak, and direct communication to the public about how to protect themselves.”



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