COVID-19 wastewater levels have doubled in the US over the past 5 weeks

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On Thursday, Biobot Analytics released its latest wastewater estimates, finding that over the last five weeks levels of SARS-CoV-2 in sewage water has doubled in the United States. These data underscore that the latest summer surge of COVID-19 has been well underway for some time, despite the near-total blackout by capitalist politicians and the corporate media.

Given the complete lack of data on actual infections across the country, wastewater is now the only reliable means of tracking viral transmission. In a tweet by *World Socialist Web Site* writer Andre Damon, which has gone viral and been viewed by nearly 1 million people, he noted, "The public is being told nothing by a government and media intent on covering up this ongoing disaster."

According to Biobot, based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and founded by an interdisciplinary group of biologists and urban studies researchers, genomic sequencing of wastewater samples demonstrate that every region of the US is presently seeing a rise in viral particles in wastewater, with the Midwest and West now playing catch-up with the Northeast and South, where the surge initially began.

This week's announcement by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that there has been a sudden spike in the number of hospitalizations and emergency department (ED) visits for COVID-19 only gives clinical validity to the use of wastewater data. Over the past week, the number of overall COVID-19 hospital admissions has risen roughly 10 percent, while emergency room visits for COVID-19 have increased 50 percent.

Data scientist JP Weiland, who has been providing critical modeling analysis on the state of the pandemic in the US, recently updated his graphs, indicating that the current wastewater levels correspond to roughly 366,000 daily COVID-19 infections. Additionally, he noted that the trend for rising hospital admissions for COVID-19 would continue well past August.

Despite these developments, the public has yet to be informed of the latest surge by the Biden administration, while the media continues to dutifully play accomplice to the cover-up, either remaining silent on the topic or minimizing the potential implications of allowing the virus to repeatedly rip through society.

For instance, after acknowledging these worrisome trends, the *Wall Street Journal* gleefully wrote, "The good news is that we are starting from very low rates." However, the current wastewater levels are already far higher than at the same time in 2020, and slightly higher than in 2021 when the Delta surge was already well underway.

Although the morbidity from an acute infection impacts the elderly and immunocompromised most severely, no one is really immune to the ravages of COVID-19, as roughly one in 10 people will develop Long COVID, often with significant consequences.

For people suffering with Long COVID for more than 12 weeks, a UK-based study found that two years on they show reduced performance in memory and reasoning tests and have poorer motor controls.

In a recent article in *The Atlantic* on fatigue, one of the most common Long COVID symptoms, patients describe its often debilitating effects. The report notes that the fatigue these people experience "has many faces." The debilitating impact of Long COVID has forced millions to leave the workforce and even more to care for their loved ones, who anguish for any answers let alone treatment for their maladies.

Under these circumstances, the CDC is manipulating its wastewater data to hide the real state of the pandemic, as only the WSWS has reported.

As the figure above from the CDC demonstrates, since the beginning of July the number of sites providing wastewater data has dropped precipitously from 1,343 to 1,114, or by nearly 20 percent. This precipitous drop in reporting sites corresponds with a blunting of the beginning of the current surge through the month of July.

This same sudden drop-off of reporting sites occurred at the end of December 2022, hiding the winter surge of the XBB.1.5 variant. Without the Biobot data to confirm the current surge, the CDC could have easily reported that the

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surge was passing and the rise in their healthcare statistics simply an anomaly.

This is only the latest in a long of data manipulation by the CDC, which has played fast and loose with data that is vital to protecting the health and welfare of the population.

On three separate occasions—with the Omicron BA.5 subvariant in October 2022, XBB.1.5 in January 2023, and XBB.1.16 in April 2023—the CDC delayed announcing the presence of the latest Omicron variants until called out under growing public pressure. Again, the WSWS is the only outlet that seriously reported these coverups.

In a recent interview, Dr. Michael Osterholm, previous adviser to the Biden administration on the pandemic, commented on the disastrous state of public health in the US, stating:

> Over the next several months, we're about to see the public health system in this country systematically dismantled. I've never seen anything like this in my 48 years in the business—the amount of claw back that has happened with resources and funds. We're going to see major layoffs in public health agencies all across the country at federal, state, and local levels. We're going to see research scaled back substantially on infectious disease.

Osterholm concluded, "If you add it all up, and then you realize the lack of trust that exists now in public health, I think we're less prepared for the future than we were in 2019 and 2020." He went on to warn:

> Just think of the following: If you look at coronavirus' potential, between SARS and MERS, they killed 15 to 35 percent of the people that got infected. The good news was that they were not nearly as infectious as SARS-CoV-2. But SARS-CoV-2 only killed a half-percent of people at most. There is nothing in the biological cookbook that says eventually we're not going to see a coronavirus that is as infectious as SARS-CoV-2 and kills at the same rate as MERS and SARS.

Given the clarity of these comments, one must ask why Osterholm authored an essay with Ezekiel Emanuel and Celine Gounder in January 2022 calling for a national strategy for living with COVID-19 as the new normal? As the WSWS warned at the time, "Rather than take measures to end the pandemic, the US political establishment is promoting the equivalent of an accounting trick, aimed at burying and concealing deaths."

The call to eliminate and eradicate the SARS-CoV-2 virus by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) early in the course of the pandemic was not simply a public health pronouncement. Rather, it was part of an international strategy to strengthen global ties among scientists and public health officials in order to prioritize the health of the world's population. Such a program, which remains both viable and necessary, requires the following:

- Investing in technology—including HEPA filtration, Far-UVC devices and emerging detection technologies—to detect and eliminate the virus in indoor public spaces
- Building a vast cadre of epidemiologists and public health experts to guide communities in safe practices while meticulously tracking infections
- Sharing of scientific breakthroughs and identifying medicines and sterilizing vaccines that could guard against the ravages of the virus
- Funding healthcare systems with highly trained staff in sufficient numbers to care for those who are falling ill and at the same time tend to the medical needs of the entire population

Fundamentally, the elimination principle aims at placing the needs of the working class foremost by creating the necessary infrastructure to ensure its health and welfare are made a priority. In a manner of speaking, it places at its fore the revolutionary principles of scientific socialism, providing a tremendous impetus to the perspective of guaranteeing social equality and a high standard of living for all people.

The dismantling of public health infrastructure and the ending of the pandemic emergency measures are in essence attacks on the entire working population and all the gains that have been won through centuries of struggle, as measured by the previously growing life expectancy. Since 2020, more than 24 million global excess deaths attributable to the pandemic could have been averted, of which a significant number occurred among working age people.

These are the fundamental lessons that the international working class must assimilate in its revolutionary role in leading the class struggle. It is not just COVID-19 that needs to be eliminated but capitalism that has given the virus the breadth to wreak havoc.

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