

Florida's surgeon general Joseph Ladapo tells people to “stay clear” of COVID-19 booster shot

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With the new COVID-19 boosters set to be greenlighted for use this week by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Florida's right-wing surgeon general Dr. Joseph Ladapo advised Floridians to stay clear of the updated mRNA vaccines tailored against the most recent variant to be dominant, Omicron XBB.1.5.

Appointed surgeon general two years ago by Florida's fascistic Governor Ron DeSantis, Ladapo has continuously spread flagrant disinformation on virtually every aspect of the pandemic.

At a press conference Thursday in Jacksonville alongside DeSantis, Ladapo falsely stated:

There's a new vaccine that's coming around the corner, a new mRNA COVID-19 vaccine, and there's essentially no evidence for it. There has been no clinical trial done in human beings showing it benefits people. There's been no clinical trial showing that it is a safe product for people—and not only that, but then there are a lot of red flags.

Reiterating a common trope of the far right, Ladapo insisted that the vaccines “actually cause cardiac injury in many people.”

Rather than provide any evidence to substantiate his unproven and misguided claims, Ladapo then urged Floridians not to accept the words of experts in the field but to make their own decisions based on their particular “resonance of truth.”

He summed up by asserting, “When they try to convince you to be comfortable and agree with things that don't feel comfortable, that don't feel like things you should agree with, that is a sign, right? That's a gift.” Such platitudes to subjective irrationalism are utterly dangerous and worse from a public figure who has a medical degree.

Firstly, Ladapo's comments are those of a con artist and a second-rate shyster with Harvard credentials who is motivated by political interests. He is fully conscious that his recommendation as a physician is harmful and will lead to the certain death of his constituents.

There is no objective basis for Ladapo's claims, which are in keeping with the rightward trajectory of the entire political

apparatus in the US. His position is only a more extreme variation of the anti-public health and anti-scientific approach in the response to the pandemic by the ruling elites that want to ensure nothing encroaches on their ability to amass profits off the backs of workers.

The current summer surge that is continuing into the autumn months has seen rates of COVID-19 infection quadruple since late June, while hospitalizations have tripled without any measure being taken by the Biden administration or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to warn the public or call for implementing any measures to mitigate the rising tide of evolving variants. More recently, COVID-19 deaths have also seen an uptick.

Ladapo knows full well that his state has been particularly impacted throughout the pandemic and that vulnerable patients in nursing homes are seeing cases climbing again.

The current iteration of the COVID-19 boosters was tested on the latest variants and ready for delivery last month, just waiting for authorization by the FDA and the CDC. Both Moderna and Pfizer's latest monovalent COVID-19 boosters were reconfigured for the Omicron XBB.1.5 variant and have shown a significant antibody response against the Eris and FLip subvariants that are growing as a percent of sequenced lineages.

More recently, Moderna reported that the immune response against the Pirola (BA.2.86) subvariant, which has more than 30 mutations on its spike protein, saw a significant 8.7-fold increase in neutralizing antibodies.

Given the present surge, one must ask why has there been a delay in delivering these life-saving treatments?

As took place with the bivalent COVID-19 vaccines one year ago, once these vaccines have undergone initial safety trials in humans, additional clinical trials are not required. This is consistent with how the FDA modifies vaccines for influenza each year. Safety events are documented and accrued regardless of the iteration of the vaccine and published by the CDC.

During the first seven weeks of the rollout of the bivalent boosters last year, from August 31 to October 23, 2022, among persons aged 12 or greater, data were collected on 22.6 million booster doses administered in the United States. The safety data were consistent with safety data they obtained on “preauthorization clinical trials of a BA.1 Omicron bivalent

booster vaccination.”

As of July 23, 2023, according to the CDC’s “Reported Adverse Events,” with hundreds of millions of COVID-19 vaccines administered, anaphylaxis occurred in about five cases per one million vaccine doses given. Multiple studies have yet to demonstrate any unusual patterns in cause of death after vaccination [See Link 1, Link 2, Link 3, and Link 4]. In fact, for those taking vaccinations, all-cause mortality was lower than the expected all-cause mortality rates.

As for vaccines causing inflammation of the heart, among persons 5 to 17 years old within 98 days of vaccination, one study found there were potentially 320 such cases out of nearly 7 million vaccine doses. Regarding young people, although the rates with mRNA are higher, they amount to 22.4 excess cases per million with Pfizer and 31.2 excess cases per million with Moderna. Most of these were reported to be transient in nature and were cleared by their physicians for all physical activity.

What Ladapo fails to note is that people infected with COVID-19 before receiving the vaccines were on the order of 7 to 11 times more at risk of developing myocarditis within one month. However, after one dose of the COVID-19 vaccines, that rate dropped by half.

Meanwhile, a report published in *Politico* in April found that Ladapo had “personally altered” the results of a state-driven study about COVID-19 vaccines to indicate they posed a significantly higher health risk for young men when in fact the actual results countered his claim.

Matt Hitchings, an assistant professor of biostatistics at the University of Florida, explained, “What’s clear from the previous analysis, and even more clear from Dr. Lapado’s edits, is that absolutely there was a political motivation behind the final analysis that was produced. Key information was withheld from the public that would have allowed them or other experts to interpret this in context.”

Another fact that Ladapo fails to mention is that in the first two years of the pandemic, there were approximately 90,000 more deaths in the US due to cardiovascular disease than expected. Although most of these were in people over 65, heart-related deaths among young people have risen by almost 25 percent during the pandemic.

Meanwhile, evidence from an Israeli study has shown that the bivalent COVID-19 boosters demonstrated high effectiveness against hospitalization and death due to COVID-19 compared to the monovalent booster in the elderly.

The lead author Dr. Ronen Arbel of Clalit Health Services in Tel Aviv told CIDRAP, “Infection data since Omicron started is underreported and incomplete. Many infections are asymptomatic. Moreover, even patients with light symptoms may not test for COVID. Therefore, all our studies since 2022 are focused on hospitalizations and mortality outcomes, which are measurable and clinically significant.”

He concluded, “Bivalent mRNA booster vaccination in adults aged 65 or older is an effective and essential tool to reduce their risk of hospitalization and death due to COVID-19. Vaccination remains the primary tool for avoiding severe COVID-19.”

Florida is home to the second highest number of adults aged 65

and older in the United States, with 4.6 million, representing 21.1 percent of their population, who face the highest risk of complications from COVID-19 infection. Ladapo telling them to forget the vaccines and eat healthier amounts to criminal negligence amid a pandemic that is gaining more momentum each day. High community rates also mean higher hospital-acquired rates of infection, with nearly one in 10 rates of death among this most vulnerable section of the population.

In reviewing the anti-vaccine panel convened by Governor DeSantis and headed by Ladapo, the WSWS wrote in December 2022:

The anti-vaccine movement that DeSantis [and company] has been courting is based on an anti-scientific perspective hostile to public health. It rejects the understanding of health as a deeply social issue, in which individual health is inseparably connected to community health.

The admonishment is equally applicable to the Biden administration and the entire strategy being employed by the ruling elites. While vaccines play a significant role in public health programs, the vaccine-only strategy towards SARS-CoV-2 has proven to be totally bankrupt, as viral evolution continues apace amid ongoing mass infection. It is increasingly clear to principled scientists, workers and anti-COVID advocates that SARS-CoV-2 must be eliminated as a public health threat and is not something that society can or should “live with” or tolerate.

The rapid waning of immunity barely buys sufficient time before the next iteration of the virus finds even more elusive mechanisms that threaten the few defenses that are available in our arsenal. The vaccine-only strategy also injects a pessimism into public consciousness, inculcating the false idea that infections are inevitable and therefore attempting to protect oneself is a lost cause.

It is to this effort that the enforcement of the forever COVID policy and rejection of all scientific and sound public health principles is aimed. It raises to the fore the revolutionary implications of calling for the global elimination of the coronavirus and the ending of all human-to-human transmission of this and many other preventable illnesses.



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