

Amid second-largest wave of COVID infections in the US, Florida's surgeon general calls to halt mRNA vaccines

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On Friday, wastewater data from Biobot Analytics and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) affirmed that the US has now reached its second-highest level of COVID-19 infections of the pandemic. It is anticipated that by midweek, rates of infections will reach 2 million per day with approximately one in 24 people infectious in the population, and up to 100 million Americans could be infected over the entire course of the wave.

Hospitalizations have been climbing fast since the beginning of November, up more than twofold at close to 35,000 COVID admissions for the week ending December 30, 2023, and approaching the highs seen last winter.

Deaths have also been trending upwards, having reached over 1,600 for the week ending December 9. Given the current rates of hospitalizations and the dominance of the JN.1 variant, which the CDC estimated Friday now accounts for 61.6 percent of all sequenced cases, one can assume fatalities will continue their upward trajectory through December and into January.

Dr. David Christopher, an Ohio emergency room doctor, recently warned on his social media, "It's a total plague ward sh*tshow in most Emergency Departments right now. Don't believe me? Then ask anyone you know who works in one. If they're being honest, willing to talk and aren't too exhausted you'll likely hear some horror stories. It hasn't been this bad since December 2021."

The same crisis conditions are happening throughout the Northern Hemisphere, including in Canada. Ontario-based senior scientist and epidemiologist Dr. Diego Bassani wrote, "Third highest number of daily hospital admissions in Ontario since the pandemic started was reached on January 1, 2024, and school has not even resumed yet. Another very normal new year."

Mask mandates have once again been implemented at a number of hospital chains in the US and other countries, as COVID-19 and other respiratory pathogens are overwhelming health systems globally.

Amid the rapidly rising tide of COVID infections and hospitalizations in the US, Florida's reactionary anti-vaccine surgeon general, Harvard-trained Dr. Joseph Ladapo, has issued a call to halt the use of anti-COVID-19 mRNA vaccines across his state.

As a public health initiative, especially with the growing height of the current surge, this maneuver is criminally dangerous and

politically motivated to garner the attention and approval of the fascistic right in the upcoming Iowa caucuses, where Governor Ron DeSantis trails former President Donald Trump. Ladapo's call to stop vaccinations is akin to advocating the abandonment of safety belts while driving in dense traffic at high velocities.

Ladapo, employing tactics familiar from anti-vaccine organizations, pseudo-scientific reasoning and willful disinformation and omission, baselessly claims that the minute fragments of DNA that remain after the mRNA vaccine manufacturing process could somehow integrate themselves into one's DNA and potentially cause cancers, impact chromosomes and have unintended consequences for varied organs including the testes and ovaries, which could then transmit these health problems to offspring. All of this is total nonsense and blatant disinformation.

The mass production of the lifesaving mRNA vaccines entails the use of bacterial DNA to amplify the spike protein of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, which are then chemically released and cut into linear DNA pieces and converted into the necessary mRNA. Enzymes are then added to chop any remaining DNA into tiny harmless fragments.

Although other vaccines employ their own production methods, the use of cell cultures means DNA fragments are present in such treatments, including the COVID vaccines. Furthermore, the foods we eat and infections we catch with bacteria, fungi and viral pathogens means we are constantly exposed to DNA fragments from a variety of sources.

Dr. Paul Offit, director of the Vaccine Education Center at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, who also serves as an FDA advisory committee member for the COVID vaccines, explained that any vaccine grown in cells, including measles and chickenpox vaccines, will have traces of harmless DNA fragments. "There are trace quantities of DNA (billionths to trillionths of a gram) per vaccine dose, which is utterly and completely harmless for several reasons."

Among these reasons, the first is that the DNA fragments would have to enter a cell's cytoplasm, which hate foreign DNA and employ several molecular/immunological mechanisms to destroy these fragments. Unlikely to survive the cytoplasm, the DNA fragments would then have to cross the nuclear membrane into the nucleus where the DNA is stored, but this requires that they

possess a nuclear access signal that such fragments do not possess.

Once inside the nucleus, the DNA fragments would have to insert themselves into the cell's DNA, which implies they would need enzymes to cut the DNA, which they lack. If the DNA fragment was miraculously integrated, it would need to occur in the right area of the DNA where the oncogenes are affected. Once the DNA fragments hypothetically were incorporated into the cell's genome at an oncogenic site, that cell would then have to undergo division and acquire new mutations to evolve into a cancer cell. However, before then, the immune system would recognize and destroy these cells before they developed into cancer.

The chances that mRNA vaccination would in any way affect an individual in the manner described above, Offit said, "are zero."

The claim made by Ladapo and others of his mindset that the mRNA COVID vaccines harbor cancer-promoting Simian Virus 40 (SV40) in Pfizer vials is also a lie. Although SV40 promoter was discovered in the Pfizer vaccines, it is nothing like the full SV40 virus. Promoters are DNA sequences that help stimulate gene expression and are part of the tools in molecular biology kits.

Philip Buckhaults, director of the Cancer Genetics Lab at the University of South Carolina, explained to AP, "It's just the volume knob that drives high level expression of anything out under its control... The fear about the SV40 sequences is total nonsense. The vaccine is not going to cause cancer. There is no cancer-causing gene in the vaccine."

Alessandro Faia, a spokesperson for the EMA noted, "There is no evidence to indicate the presence of SV40, a virus found in monkey kidneys that can potentially cause cancer in humans, in the formulation of COVID-19 vaccines."

Pfizer acknowledged that no monkey DNA was used in creating their inoculation, writing, "The vaccine is a completely synthetic vaccine. There were preclinical animal challenge studies utilizing rhesus macaques; however, no part of our vaccine or studies utilized green monkeys. The claim that the vaccine included monkey DNA is inaccurate."

The fears being drummed up by Ladapo have a historical context. Between 1955 and 1963, about 30 percent of the polio vaccines given in the US were found to be contaminated with SV40. Monkey kidney cells had been used to produce those vaccines. However, the CDC in subsequent studies found "no causal association" between the contaminated polio vaccines and cancer development.

Three years after the initial rollout of the mRNA COVID vaccines, billions of doses have been administered across every country on the globe. They have proven not only quite effective in preventing severe disease and death from infection, but they have also shown themselves to be some of the safest vaccines ever conceived. More recently, studies indicate they help reduce the risk of developing Long COVID.

Additionally, multiple independent labs in Europe, US and even Australia have repeatedly analyzed batches of these mRNA COVID vaccines and have emphatically stated that they have found no safety concerns related to these residual fragments of DNA that have been identified.

As a spokesperson for the European Medicines Agency (EMA)

recently wrote to FactCheck.org, a nonprofit organization aimed at addressing deception and confusion in US politics by researching misinformation and hoaxes, "[The agency] can confirm that we have not seen any reliable evidence of residual DNA exceeding approved safety levels [for the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines.] Nor is the EMA aware of scientific evidence showing that very small amounts of residual DNA that may be present in vaccine batches could integrate into the DNA of vaccinated individuals."

Professor of surgery Dr. David Gorski of Wayne State University, who is also managing editor of Science-Based Medicine, a site which addresses misinformation promoted in medicine, told the *Washington Post*, "I've never seen a state health authority parrot anti-vaccine disinformation as a justification for stopping the use of a vaccine that has saved so many lives before. The Republican Party has adopted anti-vaccine, anti-public health ideology of this sort as part of its belief system."

The promotion of anti-vaccine legislation as an official state public health policy is unprecedented and underscores the deep lurch to the right in every aspect of mainstream political life with untold consequences for the future.

At the same time, the policy of the Biden administration of simply ignoring the pandemic has resulted in a similar dead-end for the Democratic Party. As of mid-December, only 18 percent of American adults had taken the latest COVID booster shot. Precisely because profits must always be prioritized over life under capitalism, the policies of the Democrats give breathing space for dangerous quackery in science and the discouragement of rational thought.

The social and political dynamics of the pandemic have become ever more urgent, with revolutionary implications. To stop the pandemic requires the use of scientifically-grounded conceptions based on an international collaboration of scientists, public health departments, health systems, and workers across all industries to address. It requires the deployment of all available public health measures, including vaccines, mass testing, contact tracing, and more, none of which will be implemented under capitalism.



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