

Kennedy openly targets childhood vaccine schedule as Texas measles outbreak approaches 100 patients

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Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and other Trump appointees are launching a multi-faceted assault on public health. With the US in the midst of a “quad-demic” of seasonal flu, COVID-19, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and norovirus, alongside surges of measles and whooping cough and the looming threat of an H5N1 “bird flu” pandemic, Kennedy is enacting his plan as Health Secretary to “give infectious diseases a break for about eight years.”

On Tuesday, Kennedy delivered his first speech to employees at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), directly contradicting a pledge he made during his Senate confirmation hearing not to undermine life-saving vaccines for children. Stating that he would “convene representatives of all viewpoints to study the causes for the drastic rise in chronic disease,” he listed the childhood vaccine schedule first as a source of “formerly taboo” possible causes of chronic disease, ending the statement with the ominous words: “Nothing is going to be off limits.”

A cornerstone of the children’s vaccine schedule is the MMR vaccine that protects against measles, mumps and rubella. Kennedy’s approval as Health Secretary has coincided with a deepening measles outbreak in rural Texas and neighboring New Mexico, where 99 cases have now been confirmed, almost all unvaccinated children. At least 16 of the patients have been hospitalized so far, in what is now the largest measles outbreak in Texas in 30 years.

The deepening measles outbreak is a direct result of decades of anti-vaccine disinformation peddled by Kennedy and his fascistic co-conspirators, including at organizations like Children’s Health Defense (CHD), which Kennedy headed until running for president.

So far, Kennedy has yet to comment publicly on the Texas/New Mexico measles outbreak, but on Wednesday published a filthy article of disinformation and scientific falsification, which included the following extraordinary statements:

The media’s attempt to pin measles outbreaks on RFK Jr. is not based on science but on political opportunism. RFK Jr. has consistently advocated for vaccine safety and medical choice principles that are far from “anti-vaccine.” [...]

[W]hat mainstream medicine rarely acknowledges is that measles is not just a disease to be feared—it also has long-documented health benefits.

Emerging research shows that natural measles infection plays a critical role in immune system development and may help protect against chronic diseases, certain cancers and autoimmune disorders.

The article was written by Sayer Ji, a close ally of Kennedy and fellow member of the “Disinformation Dozen” deemed most responsible for spreading anti-vaccine propaganda during the COVID-19 pandemic. Kennedy, instead of making a public statement about the Texas outbreak, had his proxy at CHD publish what he cannot yet say, at least not until a further purge of the HHS.

The ongoing measles outbreak recalls Kennedy’s role in the horrific 2019 measles epidemic on the island of Samoa. That year, Kennedy traveled to Samoa and met

with anti-vaccine advocates, lending credibility to public figures responsible for vaccine hesitancy on the island. Shortly thereafter, the disease ripped through the island, infecting more than 5,700 people out of the population of roughly 200,000. Eighty-three people died, the majority of them young children.

The outbreak of the highly infectious, airborne virus in Texas, again the result of vaccine hesitancy cultivated by Kennedy, Ji and their ilk, could potentially be far more devastating. Texas is not a small island isolated from the rest of the world. Even slight decreases in vaccination rates by a few percentage points can trigger a massive wave of sickness and death, rapidly spreading across the region and country.

Adding to the right-wing hysteria over vaccines in general and COVID vaccines in particular, fascist billionaire Elon Musk posted a video on his platform X (formerly Twitter) of an interview on the Joe Rogan podcast with vice president JD Vance. In the video from last October, Vance claims, “The sickest that I have been in the last 15 years is when I took the vaccine.” He also says that he has had COVID-19 five times, claiming that the worst outcome he had was “like a sinus infection.”

Musk commented on the video that he had a similar experience, writing “But the mRNA booster hit extremely hard. Massive chest pain. Felt like I got hit by a truck. Almost went to hospital.”

While Musk, Kennedy and other far-right figures endlessly regurgitate the myth of widespread vaccine injury, the most effective form of protection from airborne diseases, masking, is under relentless attack.

After seeing mask bans pop up in Nassau County, New York and the state of North Carolina in 2024, a new bill was brought forth on February 18 in the Maryland general assembly. In contrast to previous mask bans, this one is being sponsored by Democrats in a historically blue state with a number of large medical hospitals and research centers, including the prestigious public health center Johns Hopkins University.

In his speech to HHS, Kennedy also made an explicit reference to collaborating with Musk and his unconstitutional Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), saying he plans to use “DOGE technology” to make Medicare and Medicaid more “efficient” and cut down on “waste and fraud.” HHS was one of the first departments to have funding deeply cut and mass

layoffs imposed, which so far exceed 5,000. Musk and the Trump administration are preparing major cuts in Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security, social programs which serve over 160 million of the most vulnerable Americans.

The unprecedented attacks on public health in the first month of the second Trump administration are only a foretaste of what is to come. In the weeks ahead, Trump’s other public health nominees are slated to be fast-tracked through the Senate, with not a single politician publicly raising opposition to any of them so far.

Jay Bhattacharya, the notorious COVID minimizer and co-author of the Great Barrington Declaration (which the WSWS correctly characterized as a “manifesto of death”) will soon lead the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Promoting the “let it rip” Swedish model, the Stanford academic Bhattacharya opposed even limited lockdowns, sowed distrust in vaccines, and denigrated masking and other public measures proven to contain the virus and save lives. His positions and public statements continue to have devastating effects on public health and public trust of vaccines.

Martin Makary, Trump’s pick to head the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), is another anti-vaccine zealot and a regular on Fox News. He has been a long-time critic of the very agency he has now been picked to run.

There is zero chance these two dangerous reactionaries will not be confirmed, placing them in charge of the very agencies responsible for national vaccine development, approval and recommendations, which have vast international influence. One can honestly say that the lunatics will soon be running the asylum. With states such as Idaho and Montana now attempting to ban mRNA vaccines, the scientific retrogression that has taken place so far will only be the beginning of an all-out repudiation of public health.



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