

Top FDA vaccine scientist resigns, denouncing Kennedy's "misinformation and lies"

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30 March 2025

Friday's resignation of Dr. Peter Marks from his role as head of the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research represents a significant milestone in the Trump administration's systematic dismantling of US public health and scientific research institutions. Dr. Marks, a key figure in orchestrating Operation Warp Speed beginning in March 2020, played the central role in the development and deployment of COVID-19 vaccines within a year of the pandemic's declaration.

In his resignation letter to Dr. Sara Brenner, acting FDA Commissioner, Marks emphasized the pivotal scientific achievements under his watch, writing:

At FDA, the tireless efforts of staff across the agency resulted in remarkably expediting the development of vaccines against the virus, meeting the standards for quality, safety, and effectiveness expected by the American public. The vaccines undoubtedly markedly reduced morbidity and mortality from COVID-19 in the United States and elsewhere.

After noting the extensive historical impact of vaccines on improving global health and well-being, Marks closed his letter with a scathing denunciation of Trump's Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., writing:

As you are aware, I was willing to work to address the Secretary's concerns regarding vaccine safety and transparency by hearing from the public and implementing a variety of different public meetings and engagements with the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. However, it has become clear that truth and transparency are not desired by the Secretary, but rather he wishes subservient confirmation of his misinformation and lies.

In his letter, Marks makes clear that a central impetus behind his resignation was Kennedy's criminal response to the deepening measles outbreak across the US, which has officially infected 400 people in Texas and over 500 across the US, the vast majority unvaccinated children. Marks wrote:

The ongoing multistate measles outbreak that is particularly severe in Texas reminds us of what happens when confidence in well-established science underlying public health and well-being is undermined. Measles, which killed more than 100,000 unvaccinated children last year in Africa and Asia owing to pneumonitis and encephalitis caused by the virus, had been eliminated from our shores.

Stating clearly that "the vaccine very simply does not cause autism, nor is it associated with encephalitis or death," Marks stressed:

It does, however, protect against a potential devastating consequence of prior measles infection, subacute sclerosing panencephalitis (SSPE), which is an untreatable, relentlessly progressive neurologic disorder leading to death in about 1 in 10,000 individuals infected with measles. Undermining confidence in well-established vaccines that have met the high standards for quality, safety, and effectiveness that have been in place for decades at FDA is irresponsible, detrimental to public health, and a clear danger to our nation's health, safety, and security.

The majority of measles cases in the worsening nationwide outbreak—approximately 75 percent—are children aged 19 and younger, while a staggering 97 percent of those infected have not received vaccinations. To date, 70 individuals have been

hospitalized, including 58 children, with 40 of those under the age of five. Two people have died so far, of whom one was an unvaccinated child.

Amid this growing crisis, some parents in Gaines County, Texas—the epicenter of the outbreak—are resorting to quack remedies and unverified supplements promoted by Kennedy to protect their unvaccinated children, including cod liver oil, rich in vitamin A. Despite this already leading to several cases of liver toxicity due to vitamin A overdose, with affected children requiring hospital treatment, Kennedy has not retracted his promotion of the quack remedy.

Despite the availability of a safe and effective vaccine, measles continues to pose a severe threat, largely due to the pervasive influence of anti-vaccine disinformation from Kennedy and his allies. The COVID-19 pandemic, rather than strengthening public engagement with scientific discourse, has profoundly exacerbated the politicization of health science and fueled anti-public health sentiments, leaving communities vulnerable to preventable diseases.

Measles was eliminated in 2000 after over 30 years of a mass vaccination campaign. Only in 2018 did cases begin to flare up again, the product of anti-vaccine sentiment fueled by the likes of Kennedy. If the current rate of infection continues, the US status of having eliminated measles will be over by next year.

Marks' resignation also takes place amidst Kennedy's gutting of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The restructuring plan, which threatens to slash staffing levels by 25 percent from 82,000 to 62,000 employees, consolidates 28 divisions into 15, and shuts down half of the HHS regional offices, has raised significant concerns about the future of public health administration in the country.

Compounding these concerns are the appointments of Great Barrington Declaration co-author Jay Bhattacharya as head of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Dr. Marty Makary as FDA Commissioner, two Trump loyalists who have spouted anti-vaccine and pro-infection propaganda throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another critical factor clearly motivating Marks' decision was Kennedy's appointment of leading anti-vaccine conspiracy theorist David Geier to lead a new official "study" into the long-debunked claims that vaccines cause autism, which has ignited a firestorm of criticism from the medical and scientific community.

Geier has been previously disciplined for practicing medicine without a license and lacks a medical degree. Along with his father, Dr. Michael Geier—who had his medical license revoked—they have been involved in multiple discredited studies attempting to establish a link between thimerosal, a vaccine preservative formerly containing ethylmercury, and autism. Notably, thimerosal has been phased out of most vaccines since 2001 due to public concerns, despite lacking evidence of harm.

Additionally, the Geiers have promoted controversial and

medically dubious treatments for autism, including chemical castration and chelation therapy, further entrenching their positions within the anti-vaccine movement. Geier's appointment obviously eliminates any credibility and integrity of the proposed "study," which will be used to advance their anti-vaccine agenda shared by Kennedy.

Despite exhaustive research by global medical and scientific communities that has found no evidence whatsoever to support a link between vaccines and autism, this new "study" will involve a deliberate attempt to undermine factual science in favor of predetermined conclusions. It will undoubtedly lead to the propagation of further disinformation and negatively impact public health, fueling the current measles outbreak and setting the stage for the proliferation of other long-eliminated infectious diseases.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Kennedy has become the central figure of the contemporary anti-vaccine movement, earning a spot as one of the "Disinformation Dozen" most responsible for promoting disinformation about the COVID-19 vaccines.

In these fascistic efforts, Kennedy has profited handsomely. Disclosures from his 2024 ethics agreement reveal substantial financial connections, including \$856,559 in referral fees from the Wisner Baum law firm over the last year, adding up to \$2.5 million over three years. This firm is known for its dubious legal battles against pharmaceutical companies, including a failed lawsuit against Merck's HPV vaccine Gardasil, which they falsely claimed could cause the cancer it aims to prevent.

Though Kennedy has reassigned his personal stakes in these lawsuits to his son, Conor Kennedy, this maneuver does not obscure the underlying profit motive and corruption tied to his political position as secretary of health. The potential for Kennedy and his associates to directly profit from promoting discredited links between vaccines and autism is alarming, as it threatens to undermine decades of public health achievements.

The current official political climate, dominated by far-right populist rhetoric and Trump's aggressive undermining of democratic norms, serves as a fertile ground for anti-vaccine movements. These movements exploit public fears and skepticism to erode trust in science and public institutions.

To counter this far-right propaganda, workers must recognize that public health and scientific truth are not personal concerns but are deeply intertwined with the class struggle. The American and international working class must organize and ally with principled scientists to force the implementation of socialist policies that prioritize public health over profit.



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