

Trump administration junks committee on preventing infections in hospitals

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The Trump administration has shut down the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee (HICPAC). HICPAC is a group of experts, industry executives and healthcare officials advising the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on preventing healthcare-associated infections (HAIs), which are infections acquired within healthcare settings where care is delivered. It also provides guidance on preventing the spread of drug-resistant bacteria.

The move follows from Trump's executive orders aimed at gutting the federal workforce, including thousands at the Department of Health and Human Services. The administration's attack on health programs and promotion of junk science through anti-vaxxers like HHS Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr will have catastrophic impacts on public health.

HICPAC offers recommendations crucial for federal healthcare standards, which provide a nationwide set of best practices to safeguard patients and healthcare professionals. These recommendations help form a national framework of daily practices to prevent the spread of infections across many different healthcare environments, including hospitals, outpatient clinics and long-term care facilities.

HICPAC's recommendations have been updated regularly since it was founded in 1991. Important guidance issued by HICPAC include a 1996 guidance that all bodily fluids be treated as potentially infectious, a 2002 guidance promoting alcohol-based hand sanitizers and a 2003 guidance on air and water quality in hospitals. Additionally, in the last ten years, it released several important guidances on preventing the transmission of drug-resistant organisms.

Ending HICPAC eliminates the framework for creating national best practices which now will have to be done at the state, local or even individual facility

level. It will lead to facilities and practitioners adhering to differing standards, potentially based more on political pressure than on widely accepted scientific evidence.

Some HICPAC members were reportedly only informed of the termination more than a month after it took effect March 31. Four members said they were informed of the termination by the CDC via a letter in early May.

The Trump administration had already crippled the CDC in its initial budget and workforce cuts begun in January. The CDC's budget was cut by 44 percent, all chronic disease programs were eliminated and about 20 percent of the CDC's staff were fired, eliminating 2,400 jobs.

The National Institutes of Health has had its budget slashed by 40 percent while the Food and Drug Administration has lost 20 percent of its staff. The Department of Health and Human Services, the parent agency of all of these agencies, has had its budget cut by one-third.

Trump also withdrew the US From the World Health Organization and canceled a meeting of a panel of experts who plan the development of the yearly flu vaccine.

The attack on public health services by the Trump administration has a two-fold motivation. On the one hand, like so many other public services targeted by Trump, the cuts to public health services are an attempt to redirect resources away from all government functions which benefit the population and do not contribute either to the enrichment of Wall Street or to the military.

On the other hand, the attack on healthcare is an attempt to undermine science and public well-being to shorten lifespans and purge vulnerable and older layers

of the population, who are seen as a drain on government spending and potential profit.

The ruling class attack on health and science predates the current actions of the Trump administration, which are an escalation of an ongoing process. The elevation of dangerous anti-science activists like Robert F. Kennedy Jr. as Department of Health and Human Services secretary and Great Barrington Declaration co-author Jay Bhattacharya as head of the NIH are part of a wider profit-driven attack on public health.

Scientifically informed, universal and quality healthcare is incompatible with the profit motive. The capitalist oligarchy, after decades of enriching itself through financial parasitism, is now cannibalizing all of the social achievements of the past.



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