

Trump-Kennedy attacks on vaccines and public health will kill millions globally

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In an extraordinary breach of scientific protocol, Dr. Vinay Prasad, the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) chief vaccine official appointed by Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., has personally overruled the recommendations of approximately 30 FDA scientists in order to restrict access to COVID-19 vaccines. Internal documents released this week reveal that FDA staff had concluded the benefits of both Moderna's mRNA and Novavax's protein-based vaccines outweighed the risks for all Americans 12 and older, following analysis of extensive clinical trials.

Instead of following established scientific procedures, Prasad issued "override memos" limiting these vaccines to Americans 65 and older and those with underlying health conditions. He justified this with the lie that "even rare vaccination related harms both known and unknown now have higher chance of outweighing potential benefits." These claims directly contradict the scientific evidence reviewed by his own staff, including CDC data which show that COVID-19 continues to cause 32,000 to 51,000 official deaths annually in the US alone.

Top FDA leaders typically do not involve themselves in individual product reviews, and such overrides are exceedingly rare. Prasad's actions establish a dangerous precedent whereby political appointees can unilaterally dismiss scientific evidence that contradicts their ideological positions, fundamentally undermining the FDA's credibility as a regulatory body guided by evidence-based medicine.

Prasad's actions must be understood within the context of Kennedy's systematic dismantling of America's vaccine advisory system. Last month, Kennedy purged all 17 members of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), the independent expert panel that has guided vaccine policy

since 1964. This "clean sweep" violated Kennedy's previous assurances to Congress and marked the first time in the committee's 61-year history that its entire membership was dismissed.

The new ACIP is stacked with notorious anti-vaccine quacks like Dr. Robert Malone, who has spread false claims about COVID-19 vaccines causing brain damage and infertility in children, and Dr. Martin Kulldorff, co-author of the Great Barrington Declaration—the "herd immunity" manifesto—who was fired from Harvard for refusing COVID-19 vaccination. Under Kulldorff's leadership, the reconstituted committee has announced plans to review the entire childhood vaccination schedule, targeting vaccines that have protected children for decades.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has boycotted ACIP meetings entirely, declaring the process "no longer credible." AAP President Dr. Susan Kressly stated defiantly, "We won't lend our name to a system that is being politicized at the expense of children's health."

The practical implications are immediate and severe. Insurance coverage for vaccines depends on CDC recommendations, which flow from ACIP guidance. With the committee now stacked with anti-vaccine ideologues, healthy children and pregnant women face losing access to COVID-19 vaccines, forcing families to pay out-of-pocket costs ranging from \$136 to \$230 per dose. For a family of four seeking full vaccination, costs could reach \$900, out of reach for the vast majority of the US population.

The Trump administration's assault on science extends far beyond US borders, threatening to unleash a global health catastrophe that is set to kill millions in the coming years. Three simultaneous withdrawals—from the World Health Organization,

USAID and the Gavi vaccine alliance—represent a coordinated abandonment of America’s role in global health initiatives which will have devastating consequences for the world’s most vulnerable populations.

A groundbreaking study published Monday in *The Lancet* provides the most comprehensive assessment yet of the human cost of these policies. Analyzing data from 133 countries over two decades, researchers found that USAID programs alone prevented 91 million deaths between 2001 and 2021, including 30 million children under five. ***The agency’s work was associated with a 65 percent reduction in HIV/AIDS deaths (25.5 million lives saved), a 51 percent decline in malaria fatalities (8 million deaths), and a 50 percent reduction in deaths from neglected tropical diseases (8.9 million lives).***

While USAID has delivered vital aid and saved millions of lives, it has always functioned as an instrument of US imperialism—using “soft power” to secure American dominance, suppress popular movements and impose pro-corporate policies worldwide. The Trump administration’s dismantling of USAID does not represent a break with this legacy but rather the lifting of any pretense of humanitarianism, with catastrophic consequences for the world’s poorest as famine and disease spread unchecked.

The Trump administration’s 83 percent cut to USAID programs threatens to reverse two decades of public health progress in low- and middle-income countries. *The Lancet* study projects that if current cuts continue through 2030, over 14 million additional deaths will occur, including 4.5 million children under five—equivalent to 700,000 excess child deaths annually. As the study’s authors noted, “For many low- and middle-income countries, the resulting shock would be similar in scale to a global pandemic or a major armed conflict.”

Kennedy’s withdrawal from Gavi, announced last week, will further compound this global health crisis. The vaccine alliance has immunized over 1.1 billion children since 2000, preventing 18.8 million deaths. Gavi models predict that losing US funding could leave 75 million children unvaccinated, causing 1 million preventable deaths over the next five years. Doctors Without Borders warned that “countless children will die from vaccine-preventable diseases,” as over half the

vaccines used in humanitarian settings come from Gavi-procured supplies.

Trump’s withdrawal from WHO eliminates America’s 15 percent share of the organization’s budget, crippling global disease surveillance and outbreak response capabilities. Harvard’s Jesse Bump warned that “public health disasters that don’t have to happen will happen, because those capacities aren’t there anymore.”

The combined effect of these three pullouts from global public health alliances threatens to create a health infrastructure collapse, with the heaviest burden falling on the world’s poorest populations who depend most heavily on international aid.

The Trump administration’s systematic assault on scientific institutions represents more than policy disagreement—it constitutes a fascist offensive against the very foundations of modern civilization. As only the *World Socialist Web Site* has consistently warned, these attacks flow from the terminal crisis of American capitalism and the ruling class’s turn toward authoritarian methods of rule.

The fight for science has become a critical front in the class struggle of the modern epoch. Every aspect of contemporary society—from the safety of the food supply and water to the development of life-saving medicines—depends on scientific research and evidence-based policy. The capitalist ruling class, facing an unprecedented crisis, seeks to confine these advances to serve only the oligarchy while abandoning the masses to conditions of barbarism not seen since the rise of fascism in the 1930s.

The Trump administration’s assault on vaccines—which have prevented 154 million deaths globally since 1974—represents a conscious effort to drag society backward, sacrificing human life on the altar of corporate profit. Only the international unification of the working class and the rebuilding of society on socialist foundations can guarantee fully-funded public health infrastructure and the development of science for all humanity.



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