

Trump's anti-science crusade against autism and the modern revival of eugenics

Evan Blake

24 September 2025

Monday's White House press conference on autism, led by Donald Trump, was the most extreme assault on medical science by any president or other elected official in American history. Flanked by Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and other HHS officials, Trump made demonstrably false and dangerous claims connecting vaccines and acetaminophen use during pregnancy to autism, in blatant contradiction to decades of rigorous scientific research.

In the course of his unhinged remarks, Trump repeated variations of "don't take Tylenol" dozens of times within less than one hour. Multiple studies have found no connection between prenatal acetaminophen use and autism, including a 2024 Swedish study involving nearly 2.5 million children. Trump and Kennedy portrayed autism as an "epidemic," wildly inflating the increased prevalence of the condition in recent decades and dismissing the expert consensus that the primary driver of this increase is broadened awareness and diagnostic criteria.

Trump spouted long-debunked myths of the anti-vaccine movement, including that no Amish people are autistic because they do not vaccinate. He falsely claimed that children "get these massive vaccines like you'd give to a horse," asserting they contain "sometimes 80 different vaccines in them." In reality, the childhood vaccine schedule involves 12 vaccines from birth through age six.

Trump's statements, which, according to inside sources, were "off script," generated precisely the confusion he intended. Immediately, healthcare providers across the US became inundated with calls from concerned parents.

Numerous medical experts and health organizations denounced the event, with Arthur Caplan of NYU Grossman School of Medicine calling it "the saddest display of a lack of evidence, rumors, recycling old myths, lousy advice, outright lies and dangerous advice I have ever witnessed by anyone in authority in the world claiming to know anything about science."

While Trump gave the appearance of a semi-senile idiot, underlying his deranged ravings and those of Kennedy are

much darker forces and motives.

By terrorizing pregnant women with false claims about acetaminophen safety and promoting dangerous delays in childhood vaccination, the Trump administration is shifting responsibility from the government and healthcare providers to individual parents and families. Trump's intended message is that if parents cause their children's autism through their own choices, why should the government bear the cost of support services?

Furthermore, Trump is seeking to undermine people's trust in science and scientific institutions, portraying them as essentially lying and concealing the real cause of autism.

These attacks on science are intimately connected to the Trump administration's broader fascist program. Monday's press conference took place the day after the state memorial for Charlie Kirk, which took on the character of a Christian fascist rally aimed at cultivating a far-right movement and obliterating the separation of church and state. Throughout the event, speakers repeatedly invoked "spiritual warfare," while Kennedy and others explicitly compared Kirk to Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the most alarming element of the Trump administration's promotion of disinformation about autism is the central role being played by David Geier. In the 2000s, Geier, alongside his father Mark, promoted fraudulent theories connecting autism to mercury and testosterone. As a supposed "miracle cure," they administered Lupron injections to hundreds of autistic children despite knowing that this could cause chemical castration. As a result, Mark Geier had his medical licenses revoked in all 12 states where he practiced, while David Geier, who holds only a bachelor's degree and is not a physician, was fined \$10,000 for practicing medicine without a license.

In late March, Kennedy appointed David Geier as a "senior data analyst" at HHS to run clinical trials looking to tie vaccines to autism, while giving him broad access to CDC databases. While HHS abandoned explicit "autism registry" plans after a public outcry, Geier now oversees a \$50 million autism data collection initiative that privacy

advocates warn could enable harmful research targeting autistic individuals, effectively continuing his eugenicist agenda under government authority.

Kennedy, Geier, Trump and the ghouls now running the various HHS agencies are reviving the same eugenicist ideology that animated large sections of the American right in the early 20th century and provided the intellectual foundation for Nazi racial hygiene policies.

The Nazi T4 program, which began with the systematic murder of disabled people, serves as the historical precedent for what is now unfolding. The program targeted people with conditions, including epilepsy, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy and schizophrenia, as well as communication and developmental disorders that today would fall under the umbrella of autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The Nazis established medical panels to approve the “euthanasia” of disabled children and adults as “mercy killings,” using physicians to oversee gassings in chambers disguised as showers. The murder of disabled people became the testing ground for the Holocaust’s gas chambers and mass deportations.

The modern eugenics revival was also expressed by Fox News anchor Brian Kilmeade’s recent statement that homeless people with mental illness should receive “lethal injections,” while the parallels between the Nazis’ concentration camp system and Trump’s mass deportation program are unmistakable. Masked ICE agents now prowl American streets, spiriting away immigrants to concentration camps dotted across the US, to Guantanamo Bay, or to El Salvador’s notorious CECOT mega-prison, all with conditions which amount to torture.

The Trump administration’s latest attacks on science take place amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, as the US is in the midst of its 11th wave of mass infection. A mega-systematic review published last month found that Long COVID now affects 36 percent of those infected globally, reaffirming that this is the largest mass disabling event in modern history. In response, both the Trump administration and the Democratic Party have enforced the complete abandonment of public health protections, reflecting the ruling class consensus that workers’ health is expendable to ensure the flow of corporate profits.

Significantly, eugenicist conceptions were also advanced under the Biden administration. In January 2022, amid the devastating first Omicron wave, then-CDC Director Rochelle Walensky declared that the fact that COVID-19 predominantly kills people who are “unwell to begin with” was “encouraging news.” Amid the August 2023 COVID wave, Anthony Fauci blithely declared that older people, the ill and disabled “will fall by the wayside.” Both Walensky and Fauci implied that the lives of elderly, chronically ill and

disabled people were less valuable than healthy ones.

Over the past eight months, the Trump administration has carried out a systematic assault on all scientific institutions, cutting the positions of over 20,000 federal public health workers and scientists, canceling more than 800 research grants, and imposing crippling budget cuts on all HHS agencies.

This government is implementing policies that represent nothing less than social murder and pillaging on a mass scale. The response from masses of workers, young people and professionals has been one of growing opposition and radicalization. Huge segments of the population oppose these policies, as evidenced by widespread condemnation from medical professionals, scientists and public health experts. The official glorification of Charlie Kirk has provoked revulsion among broad sections of the working class and youth.

The response of the Democratic Party reveals their fundamental allegiance to the same corporate interests that Trump serves. The attacks on vaccines are part of the bipartisan ruling class policy of lowering workers’ life expectancy, reducing pension obligations, and gutting all public health and social services. Trump expresses this most crudely, but the fundamental drive to reduce social expenditures through the deliberate shortening of working class lifespans enjoys complete bipartisan support, which explains why no Democrats have sought to mobilize opposition against these attacks on science.

Democratic leaders fear mass opposition to Trump above all else because they understand that such movements inevitably challenge the entire capitalist system that both parties represent. They are terrified that anything they do might legitimize and contribute to growing social unrest.

The defense of science and public health requires the independent mobilization of the working class based on a socialist program. The oligarchy’s embrace of eugenics reflects its understanding that genuine public health measures conflict fundamentally with its class interests. Only through the overthrow of the capitalist system that has elevated such figures to power can humanity defend itself against the barbarism that Trump and his backers represent.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact