



Health Watch USAsm Newsletter

www.healthwatchusa.org Mar. 1, 2022

Member of the National Quality Forum and a designated "Community Leader" for Value-Driven Healthcare by the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services

In the Month of Feb. Health Watch USAsm had:

- 6 articles/op-eds regarding COVID-19.
- 9 Radio Shows concerning the COVID-19 virus.
- 1 Presentation.

Our 2021 COVID-19 Conference Presentations and additional resources can be accessed from:

<http://www.healthwatchusa.org/COVID19.htm> & www.healthconference.org

Health Watch USA's June 15, 2021 Annual Conference: COVID-19: A Global Perspective

<http://www.healthconference.org>

Health Watch USA's 2021 Activities Report:

<http://www.healthwatchusa.org/HWUSA-Officers/20211231-HWUSA-Report-2021.pdf>

Health Watch USA's 2020 Activities Report:

<http://www.healthwatchusa.org/HWUSA-Officers/20201231-HWUSA-Report-2020.pdf>

Health Watch USA - Federal Comment & Action Letter

Action Letters Requesting an independent Presidential Federal Advisory Committee for COVID-19 be reestablished under the Biden administration. The letter is signed by Health Watch USA, National Nurses United and the Mass. Nurses Assoc. Jan. 15, 2022.

* [Senator Mitch McConnell](#)

* [Senator Chuck Schumer](#)

* [White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator Mr. Jeff Zients](#)

Written Comment on the U.S. Senate Help Committee's bipartisan Pandemic and Public Health Preparedness and Response Bill (PREVENT Pandemics Act) Feb. 3, 2022.

<http://www.healthwatchusa.org/HWUSA-Initiatives/PDF-Downloads/20220205-WrittenComment-SenateHELPCommittee.pdf>

Health Watch USA - Presentations



COVID-19: School Safety and Mitigation in Massachusetts

Amanda Mulcahy, RN describes the COVID-19 mitigation strategies which have been implemented at her Massachusetts' school system. These include upgrading ventilation, masks, social distancing, barriers, outdoor classes, robust testing, vaccinations and boosters, and symptom

monitoring and tracking. The collection of data was also used to evaluate strategies and to guide the timing of implementation. Health Watch USAsm Meeting. <https://youtu.be/JVYKWhW0ffk>

Health Watch USA - News Articles & OpEds



Disinformation is still hurting in Kentucky's battle against COVID-19

Immunity elicited by boosters markedly diminishes after 6 months, but vaccines are our best bridge until antiviral therapeutics become widely available and also to keep our facilities from being overrun. Pfizer and Moderna are both reformulating a vaccine for the Omicron variant and plan to have it available before Summer. For now, let's just take one month at a time and use the tools which are available to us. The disinformation which some are spewing is nothing short of parroting the propaganda playbook of our communists' adversaries. It is dividing and weakening our country. We as a country must do better. [References](https://www.kentucky.com/opinion/op-ed/article258253965.html) Lexington Herald Leader. Feb. 11, 2022. <https://www.kentucky.com/opinion/op-ed/article258253965.html>



Perspective: Relaxing Mask Guidance Must Be Done 'Carefully'

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is expected to relax mask guidelines on indoor mask requirements Friday. Reports have indicated the new guidelines will be based, at least in part, on hospitalizations and hospital capacity. First, the metric for hospitalizations is a lagging indicator, and basing action on increasing hospitalizations will make our actions reactive and not proactive. Second, there are data that indicate we may not yet be in an endemic phase of the pandemic. During the month of February, deaths spiked in South Africa. In Denmark, a country whose cases are almost totally comprised of the BA.2 variant, deaths are at an all-time high. For me, this is reason enough to continue masking. [References](#) Infection Control Today. Feb. 25, 2022.

<https://www.infectioncontrolday.com/view/perspective-relaxing-mask-guidance-must-be-done-carefully>

COVID-19 Boosters: New MMWR Report Explores Waning Immunity

The research found vaccine efficacy in the prevention of visits to urgent treatment centers and emergency rooms fell from 87% at 2 months, to 66% at 4 months, to 31% at ≥ 5 months. A WHO Variant of Concern, the Stealth Omicron (BA.2), may pose even new challenges and has been reported to be more severe and infectious than Omicron (BA.1). In addition, it is being initially reported that it may “largely” escape current vaccines and could be resistant to many monoclonal antibody products, including the GSK antibody, sotrovimab. However, a vaccination booster appears to restore immunity with a 74% protection against illness. [References](#) Infection Control Today. Feb. 18, 2022. <https://www.infectioncontrolday.com/view/covid-19-boosters-new-mmwr-report-explores-waning-immunity>

Viewpoint: How to Improve U.S. Dismal COVID-19 Response

Former President Trump’s Presidential Federal Advisory Committee for COVID-19 needs to be reestablished under President Biden. The United States Senate HELP Committee will hold a hearing tomorrow to officially begin the process of formulating legislation to strengthen our pandemic preparation and response. All of the provisions focus on acronyms of the CDC, FDA, BARDA, ASPR, NIAID and the GAO. What is missing is OSHA and frontline worker protection, this includes infection preventionists. [References](#) Infection Control Today. Feb. 7, 2022. <https://www.infectioncontrolday.com/view/viewpoint-how-to-improve-u-s-dismal-covid-19-response>

Free At-Home COVID Tests on Way for Medicare Beneficiaries

"Kevin Kavanagh, MD, a member of Infection Control Today®’s Editorial Advisory Board, said that while he’s happy about CMS’s plan, he also added that “when the problem was detected, most had a hard time believing it even existed. Why would Medicare not pay for home tests when private insurance did, and the elderly were the highest risk for COVID? This rule change will help with future variants, but the Omicron surge will likely have subsided before a Medicare recipient can obtain a free home test kit at a pharmacy.” In the meantime, Medicare beneficiaries can order 4 free at-home tests by going to covidtests.gov." [References](#) Infection Control Today. Feb. 3, 2022. <https://www.infectioncontrolday.com/view/free-at-home-covid-tests-on-way-for-medicare-beneficiaries>

Radio / Podcasts

COVID-19: CDC Revises Mask Guidance & Wuhan Market

Dr. Kevin Kavanagh from Health Watch USAsm discusses the new CDC mask guidance which changed the country from 95% of the country's counties being in high-risk to now only 30% are in the high-risk category. The new metric is based on hospital beds and hospital admissions along with the country's case load. Concern was expressed that basing action on the lagging indicator of

hospitalizations will not allow us to detect and rapidly blunt an impending surge. In other words, we will be reactive instead proactive in our public health system. In addition, these regulations may be placing the approximately 1 in 30 immunocompromised individuals at risk. Indications for the first and second booster were reviewed along with encouraging all, even those who have had a previous infection to become vaccinated. Finally, new research indicating the Wuhan Animal Market was the source of the pandemic was discussed. Jack Pattie Show. Feb. 28, 2022.

<https://youtu.be/kBdZVfQEBLA>

COVID-19: BA.2's Even More Concerning Sub-Variant, H78Y Mutation

Dr. Kevin Kavanagh from Health Watch USAsm discusses the recent randomized controlled trial which failed to show any benefit of Ivermectin to prevent severe COVID-19. The CDC has reported immunity produced by boosters is waning after 4 months and the country of Israel is administering a fourth vaccine dose to all. In the United State a fourth dose is recommended to those with significant immunocompromise. If one has questions they should consult their doctor. An Omicron specific vaccine is expected to be available by late spring. The United States is relaxing restrictions for COVID-19. But this may not be a good time to let down our guard. The BA.2 Variant (Stealth Omicron) is ravaging Denmark and is more infectious and appears to cause more severe disease than Omicron (BA.1). In addition, a new Omicron Sub-Variant with a H78Y is even more concerning and has the potential to be even more infectious, cause more severe disease and even augment Omicron's propensity to evade immunity. Jack Pattie Show. Feb. 21, 2022.

<https://youtu.be/jockCQ3pkek>

COVID-19: Masks Work! Natural Immunity Augmented by Vaccinations

Dr. Kevin Kavanagh from Health Watch USAsm discusses the waning immunity with boosters which is occurring after 4 months. Immunity is also waning from natural infections but on average not as rapidly. With the Omicron Variant both 2-dose mRNA vaccine and natural immunity need to be boosted. New research suggests even one dose of a vaccine will greatly augment natural immunity. The dangers of the Stealth Omicron, BA.2, is discussed. It is reported to be more infectious than Omicron, as deadly as Delta and has an even greater propensity to avoid immunity. The effectiveness of masks is discussed along with the problems with a Bill under consideration in the Kentucky House which would ban mask mandates in Kentucky Public Schools for all bacteria and viruses. Schools should not let up on public health strategies, including the use of masks, improving ventilation, social distancing, robust testing and contract tracing. Jack Pattie Show. Feb. 18, 2022.

<https://youtu.be/qaliBT-6qJA>

COVID-19: Relaxing Too Soon & Spreading Outdoors in White Tail Deer

Dr. Kevin Kavanagh from Health Watch USAsm discusses the need to bring the pandemic under control and lower rates. Now is not the time to relax. The virus will always be with us. Omicron is in white tail deer on Staten Island. Deer represent an example that this virus can effectively spread in an outdoor environment. We need to follow public health advice regarding social distancing and wearing N95 masks. New and promising treatments are under development with new vaccines and the GSK monoclonal antibody treatment is currently available which may be effective on a wide range of variants. Jack Pattie Show. Feb. 11, 2022. <https://youtu.be/GBUA1yyJ0j4>

Kentucky Hospitals on Verge of Collapse.

Dr. Kevin Kavanagh from Health Watch USAsm discusses last night's CBS 60 mins report regarding Ky Hospitals being overwhelmed with COVID-19 unvaccinated patients. Ambulances are waiting an hour before transferring patients to the ER. Admitted patients are waiting days for a hospital bed and there are severe staff shortages which place patients at risk. In addition, staff are being exposed to both verbal and physical abuse by patients who believe the pandemic and COVID-19 is a hoax. Many times, demanding unproven treatments such as with Ivermectin. There was a recent study by Reuters which mixed up having an effect with being effective. All investigational drugs have an effect on the disease being investigated but few are eventually found to be both safe and effective, allowing them to be used in the treatment of patients. Ivermectin is being studied at Vanderbilt so let's wait for the results of controlled studies before using the medication. Jack Pattie Show. Feb. 7, 2022. <https://youtu.be/DqYaQ96vit0>

COVID-19 Articles of Interest



Serious red flags to spot bad health Advice (Please note, the virus IS airborne)

The following is common items of misinformation.

- * Coronavirus isn't airborne
- * Just stay 6 feet
- * Plexiglass
- * Don't worry about variants
- * Can't get reinfected
- * No need to mask indoors
- * Learn to live" with the virus
- * Kids are practically immune

(Adapted from a Tweet Feb. 26, 2022 - Dr. Eric Feigl-Ding)

New Coronavirus Lineage Discovered in Ontario Deer

NYT - "Previous studies have found that the virus is widespread in white-tailed deer. Research suggests that humans have repeatedly introduced the virus to deer, which then transmit it to one another. How humans are spreading the virus to deer remains a mystery, and until now, there has been no evidence that the animals are passing it back to humans." Deer may become a host or reservoir for the virus and become an important source of future variants. Mar. 1, 2022.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/health/coronavirus-variant-deer-ontario.html>

Why don't some people want to get the vaccine? Here's why -- *Musa al-Gharbi*.

The Guardian - "Left-leaning people wonder 'what's wrong' with the unvaccinated. But what if their non-compliance isn't that surprising? Any of these factors could reasonably contribute to mistrust and non-compliance. And critically, these have just been issues related specifically to vaccines. There have been many similar tensions with respect to authorities' approach to Covid more broadly. For instance:...." Feb. 15, 2022.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/feb/15/this-is-why-some-people-dont-want-to-get-the-covid-vaccine>

Booster effectiveness wanes after 4 months, but showed sturdy protection against hospitalization, CDC study shows

Washington Post - "Protection faded more in preventing trips to urgent care and emergency departments, falling from 87 percent in the first two months to 66 percent after four months. After more than five months, vaccine effectiveness fell to roughly 31 percent, but researchers noted that estimate was "imprecise because few data were available" for that group of people." Feb. 11, 2022

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/02/11/covid-boosters-omicron-protection/>

Not Just Humans: Study Finds NYC Omicron Spike Hit Deer Too

US News - "The omicron variant was detected in nasal swabs from seven of 68 Staten Island deer tested between Dec. 13 and Jan. 31, according to the study, which was funded by the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture."

<https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2022-02-08/not-just-humans-study-finds-nyc-omicron-spike-hit-deer-too>

Staff shortages, COVID patients pushing hospitals to breaking point

60 Mins - "Univ. of Louisville & Ky. We saw ER's that were shorthanded and nurses and doctors who were exhausted. After two years of soldiering through COVID, they told us the pandemic had pushed them & their hospital close to a breaking point." Feb. 6, 22

<https://twitter.com/healthwatchusa/status/1490489827887824898>

COVID-19 Global Update



COVID-19: A Perspective from Healthcare Professionals from Around The World.

On Dec 15, 2021, a meeting of prominent infectious disease experts from around the world was conducted by Health Watch USAsm.

Authorities from the United States, Singapore, Australia, Germany, and Peru were in attendance along with a short narrative update from the United Kingdom. Overall, all nations are reporting a significant rise in cases due to the Delta Variant. Omicron is starting to take hold and the United Kingdom is bracing for an onslaught of patients which may overrun their healthcare system. Preventative strategies and barriers of the various countries are presented. Strategies discussed are masking, testing, travel bans, vaccine passports, natural immunity, vaccinations and financial disincentives. The United States, similar to other countries around the world, have little or no reserve to muster to confront an onslaught of hospitalizations due to the highly infectious Omicron Variant. Unless the United States starts to embrace public health advice, COVID-19 may become a catastrophe both in lives ruined, lost and in economically breaking dollar costs. Health Watch USAsm Meeting. Dec. 15, 2021. <https://youtu.be/QOgZcBPqBEk>



COVID-19 Lessons Learned: A Global Perspective

**Health Watch USAsm &
Massachusetts Nurses Association**



White Paper: COVID-19 lessons learned: a global perspective

On June 15, 2021, infectious disease authorities from around the world participated in a joint webinar to share experiences and lessons learned in combating the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the overriding goals of the conference “COVID-19 Lessons Learned: A Global Perspective” was to provide documentation of worldwide COVID-19 response strategies, in order to combat the plethora of misinformation and conspiracy theories that are being actively disseminated. This misinformation is having a profound negative impact on controlling the pandemic in many countries. Misinformation which was addressed in the conference included challenging the seriousness of COVID-19 infections, a refusal to recognize aerosolization as the major mechanism of spread, a belief that schools can be opened safely without implementation of extensive

control strategies, and that masks and vaccines are not effective. A second goal was the identification of common strategies between nations. Common strategies included the implementation of a range of closures, mask mandates, travel bans and the need for expanded testing. But of utmost importance there was recognition of the need to implement a coordinated national strategy, which is depoliticized

and led by scientists. ARIC. Aug. 26, 2021.

<https://aricjournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13756-021-00992-x>

Conference Videos are Now Available. Continuing Educational Credits through Southern Kentucky AHEC. For more information on continuing education go to www.healthconference.org



COVID-19: Veteran Administration's Fourth Mission

Acting Deputy Secretary Carolyn Clancy and Under Secretary Dr. Beth Taylor discusses the Veteran Administration's fourth mission to aid and support state and local health care systems in times of pandemics and other health emergencies. The presentation details the Veterans Administration activities to support health care systems during the COVID-19 pandemic along with lessons learned during the reassignment of resources and staff to support the United States' pandemic response. YouTube Video: <https://youtu.be/oBtNJeoNW2k>

COVID-19: Introduction To Suppression Strategies

Dr. Kevin Kavanagh from Health Watch USAsm discusses strategies used by many countries including exclusion, elimination, suppression, and mitigation; along with the disruptive influences of misinformation and false hopes for herd immunity. YouTube Video: <https://youtu.be/Ej98j5WiGUw>

COVID-19: Lessons Learned in Australia

Professor Imogen Mitchell, Clinical Director of the Australian Capital Territory COVID-19 Response, discusses lessons learned in Australia. To date there are 910 deaths from COVID-19. If the United States did as well, adjusted for population, we would have lost less than 13,000 individuals. Australia is a federated nation, early on the State and Territories formed a national governing committee, guided by scientists, to formulate and direct the nation's COVID-19 response. Strategies included a zero tolerance for cases with cities imposing lockdowns, masking, physical distancing, along with strong testing and contact tracing for as few as 1 or 2 cases. Travel restrictions and 14-day quarantine were imposed on those entering the country and travel between State and territories was restricted during outbreaks. YouTube Video: <https://youtu.be/UpFrw3Wdbmw>

COVID-19: Lessons Learned in Singapore

Dr. Matthias Maiwald, Adjunct Associate Professor at the Department of Microbiology & Senior Consultant in Microbiology, National University of Singapore, discusses the COVID-19 response in Singapore. Strategies used were social distancing, mask wearing, and the closing of schools and non-essential businesses during a full lock-down. In addition, contact tracing was facilitated by phone app reporting of contacts in Singapore's population. Outbreaks occurred in migrant workers' dorms, and other outbreaks were associated with the airport, a hospital and a shopping mall. At hospitals, all patients were tested for SARS-CoV-2 upon admission and staff were tested every two weeks, if vaccinated; and once a week, if not vaccinated. An important observation was that during the full lock-down, infectious diseases caused by many other respiratory viruses all but disappeared. Rhinoviruses and enteroviruses reappeared 13 weeks after the end of lock-down, later adenoviruses reappeared. However, influenza stayed at a very low level well into 2021. This is a testament as to how effective the

transmission of SARS-CoV-2 is in comparison to other respiratory viruses, and how difficult it will be to eradicate it around the world. YouTube Video: <https://youtu.be/-WPQv9ghTy0>

COVID-19: Lessons Learned in Kenya

Dr. Paul Yonga discusses lessons learned in Kenya. Kenya adopted a suppression strategy guided by a newly formed National Emergency Response Committee. The country utilized regional and localized lockdowns, mandatory masking, curfews and social distancing. Barriers included stigmatization of the disease, large political rallies and a lack of vaccines, the latter of which inhibited the long-term effectiveness of a suppression strategy. There were also poor working conditions for frontline workers and healthcare staff, including a lack of PPE and pay shortages. Currently, Kenya is expecting another wave, possibly driven by the Delta Variant which comprises 90% of sequenced cases in some regions. YouTube Video: <https://youtu.be/oTOFJiLYa2Q>

COVID-19: India In Crisis -- Vineeta Gupta, MD, JD

Dr. Vineeta Gupta describes the conditions in India and the socioeconomic challenges which inhibit the pandemic's control. The impact of the Delta (B1617.2) Variant on India and the United States is also discussed. <https://youtu.be/vsOj76yBH9g>

COVID-19: Lessons Learned in Spain

Dr. Jesús Rodríguez-Baño, MD, PhD from University Hospital Virgen Macarena, University of Sevilla discusses Spain's COVID-19 response. Spain is a federated nation. The country underwent three waves. During the first wave a national emergency was declared, and a hard lockdown was enacted. In the second and third waves regional governments guided the response. During these waves there were limits on gatherings and universal masking was mandated. Spain did not have a well-developed anti-vaccination movement as was seen in other European countries. However, the COVID-19 response became politicized during the second and third waves, a phenomenon seen in several other countries, including the United States. There was also intense discussion over the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine. Politics and economics took the lead in some of the decisions instead of healthcare, but everyone agreed there needs to be a balance in every decision taken. YouTube Video: <https://youtu.be/pWuu10Gg7ro>

COVID-19: Lessons Learned in Germany

Dr. Sebastian Hoehl presents on COVID-19 lessons learned in Germany. Dr. Hoehl was one of the first to recognize that asymptomatic spread is a major contributor to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. In his presentation he discusses strategies used by Germany to quell COVID-19 surges and the importance of frequent testing in the opening of schools. He also discusses the social disparities of COVID-19 and how it targets and disproportionately affects the socially disadvantaged. YouTube Video: https://youtu.be/_9is03QomGI

COVID-19: Lessons Learned In The United Kingdom

Dr. Stephanie Dancer provides an extensive description of how SARS-CoV-2 spreads and the importance of aerosolization. COVID-19 clusters at NHS Lanarkshire, Scotland, was caused by spread from the community, and was transmitted in hospitals by both patients and staff. Corrective measures included the use of masks, opening of windows and minimizing the risks in bathrooms and of toilet plumes. Air exchanges in most hospitals were deficient. They were improved to six complete air exchanges per hour for general wards and ten for bathrooms. Proper building ventilation is of utmost importance in controlling respiratory pathogens. YouTube Video: <https://youtu.be/sMW3wUWUboA>

COVID-19: Lessons Learned in the United States

Dr. Kevin Kavanagh from Health Watch USAsm discusses how the United States has viewed and dealt with COVID-19. Barriers to true acceptance are exemplified by Kubler-Ross stages of grief: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Final Acceptance. The role of foreign adversaries and misinformation is discussed and how this is preventing true acceptance of COVID-19 and an effective pandemic response.

YouTube Video: <https://youtu.be/eV8lBv7ADU4>

COVID-19: Comments Regarding Variants

Dr. Kevin Kavanagh Discusses COVID-19 Variants

1. The Delta Variant detected in The United States & the need for more genomic sequencing to detect community spread.
2. Mutations and Variants can be tracked on the websites.
<https://nextstrain.org/> and <https://outbreak.info/>
3. How Variants are named and How The Spanish Flu Got its Name.
4. Almost all nations in almost all pandemics mitigate the severity and extent of disease and deaths.

YouTube Video: <https://youtu.be/U9Xs6JizJSE>

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