



Health Watch USAsm Newsletter

<https://www.healthwatchusa.org> Oct. 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 July Health Watch USAsm had:

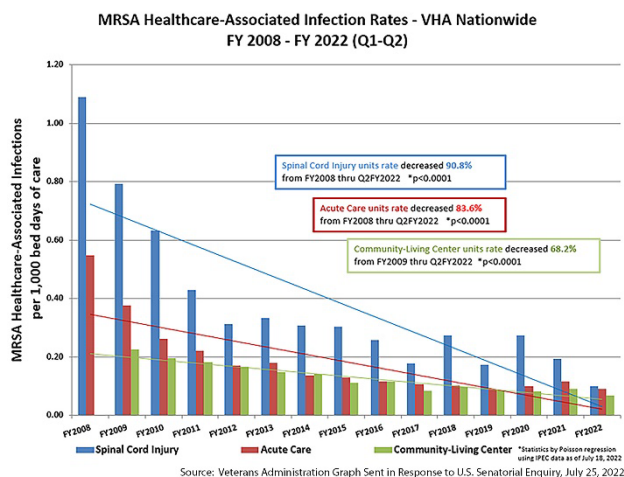
- 3 articles/op-eds regarding COVID-19.
- 4 Radio Shows concerning the COVID-19 virus.
- 14 Presentations.

Information & Registration for Health Watch USAsm Sept. 14th, 2022 COVID-19 Conference - Frontline Worker Safety: <https://healthconference.org>

Health Watch USA's 2021 Activities Report: <https://www.healthwatchusa.org/HWUSA-Officers/20211231-HWUSA-Report-2021.pdf>

Health Watch USA's 2020 Activities Report: <https://www.healthwatchusa.org/HWUSA-Officers/20201231-HWUSA-Report-2020.pdf>

Health Watch USA - News Articles & OpEds



Success and failures in MRSA infection control during the COVID-19 pandemic

Private sector facilities in the United States have experienced a resurgence of Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) hospital-onset infections during the COVID-19 pandemic, which eliminated all gains that were achieved over the last decade. The third quarter of 2021, the Standardized Infection Ratio for hospital onset MRSA bloodstream infections was 1.17, well above the baseline value of 1.0. In contrast, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has been able to maintain its mitigation efforts and low rates of MRSA hospital-onset infections through the second quarter of fiscal year 2022 (Mar. 31, 2022), the most recent available data. The

difference may be explained not only by the VHA's use of uniform mitigating policies which rely on active surveillance and contact precautions, but also on the VHA's ability to maintain adequate staffing during the pandemic. Future research into MRSA mitigation is warranted and this data supports the need for healthcare system transformation. Antimicrobial Research and Infection Control. Sept. 24, 2022.

<https://aricjournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13756-022-01158-z>



COVID-19 Risk Adjustment, Driving Transformation or Normalizing Deviance? It is Our Choice

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. healthcare system neared collapse, in large part due to lean staffing and meager stockpiles of supplies. However, instead of transformation, it appears policymakers have assumed that facilities can do little to prevent safety lapses in the presence of COVID-19, and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) have decided to “risk” adjust quality metrics used in financial incentives. Risk adjustment should only be applied when

effective strategies do not exist to prevent the occurrence of adverse outcomes. The question remains: Are we going to meet the challenge, build the needed infrastructure and strengthen our healthcare system to adapt to the new normal, or are we going to normalize deviance with continued lean staffing and just-in-time supply chains? I would choose the former and use financial incentives to drive the change. [References](https://blogs.biomedcentral.com/on-health/2022/09/27/covid-19-risk-adjustment-driving-transformation-or-normalizing-deviance-it-is-our-choice/) On Health, BMC, Sept 27, 2022. <https://blogs.biomedcentral.com/on-health/2022/09/27/covid-19-risk-adjustment-driving-transformation-or-normalizing-deviance-it-is-our-choice/>

Health Watch USA - News Articles & OpEds



How a new phase of fighting COVID requires the public to pay: Opinion

Due to lack of congressional funding, the Biden administration announced plans to curtail the funding of COVID-19 tests, treatments and vaccines shifting the financing and burden of the epidemic onto the public and private market. Along with Kentucky's recent devastating natural disasters, curtailing federal payment on vaccines, tests and treatments is another stressor which risks the health and well-being of Kentuckians. As calls for a national public healthcare system are becoming louder, this is a step in the opposite direction. The best advice is to take advantage of the vaccines, ordering of tests and the bivalent BA.5 booster which will be available in early September before federal coverage for all is suspended. [References](https://www.courier-journal.com/story/opinion/2022/09/02/how-a-new-phase-of-fighting-covid-requires-the-public-to-pay-opinion/65465464007/) Courier Journal. Sept. 2, 2022. <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/opinion/2022/09/02/how-a-new-phase-of-fighting-covid-requires-the-public-to-pay-opinion/65465464007/>



The Autumn COVID-19 Booster Is Here: Is it Safe and Effective?

On Sept. 1st the first autumn boosters will begin to be available, but individuals may be concerned about their efficacy and safety. Ample safety data and immunological response data indicates the reformulated boosters to the BA.4/5 Variant will provide an improvement in efficacy. The magnitude of this improvement is not known, and the mitigation of this augmentation due to “antigenic sin” is also not known. In the beginning of the pandemic, mRNA vaccines were heralded as a major breakthrough allowing rapid adaptation and distribution of a reformulated vaccine. To accomplish this feat in 2 months is just remarkable and validates the initial optimism for this technology. I feel a monovalent vaccine booster for BA.4/5 may have been better. However, the current authorized BA.4/5 bivalent booster promises to give much better protection to the BA.4/5 variant than the original booster. I will be first in line to receive the newly reformulated version. [References](https://www.infectioncontroltoday.com/view/the-autumn-covid-19-booster-is-here-is-it-safe-and-effective-) Infection Control Today. Sept. 2, 2022. <https://www.infectioncontroltoday.com/view/the-autumn-covid-19-booster-is-here-is-it-safe-and-effective->

Immunity Lessons From COVID-19: Natural Infection vs Vaccination

Several of those studies focusing heavily on natural and vaccination immunity were conducted by Laith Jamal Abu-Raddad, PhD. Speaking in an exclusive interview with Infection Control Today® (ICT®), Ab-Raddad discussed some of these studies about immunity, vaccination hesitancy, and his presentation titled, "Immune protection of COVID -19 vaccination and natural infection," at the "Frontline Worker Safety in the Age of COVID-19: A Global Perspective" a Health Watch USA Webinar on September 14, 2022.

<https://www.infectioncontrolday.com/view/immunity-lessons-covid-19-natural-infection-vs-vaccination>



Biden declares the COVID-19 pandemic over as experts keep wary eye on potential fall surge. By Frank Diamond

Deborah Birx, M.D., who served in the Trump administration as the White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator, last Thursday addressed a conference hosted by the consumer advocacy organization Health Watch USA. She warned of COVID-19 surges coming in the fall (which officially arrives this Thursday).

"This was just last week," she said of a slide showing where COVID seems to be surging. "I call your attention to Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia, Northern Alabama, and Mississippi, and Northern Louisiana. You can see the surges. There's a high potential for community spread. And this is just after schools have started."

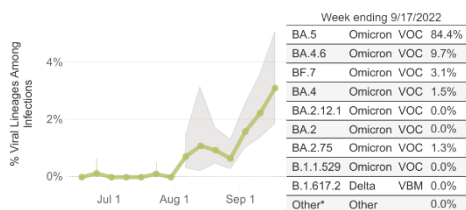
Nonetheless, Birx said, there's plenty of reason to be optimistic about the battle against COVID. "We have 21st century tools and knowledge to keep every American safe from hospitalization and death," Birx said.

Those include vaccination and testing, although she cautioned that that's not enough to protect vulnerable family members. Other measures include proactive testing through surges and immediate administration of Paxlovid if the individual is at-risk for significant disease. She also urged the use of N95 masks for at-risk individuals and maintaining proper airflow in buildings.

Fierce Healthcare Sept. 19, 2022 <https://www.fiercehealthcare.com/payers/biden-declares-covid-19-pandemic-over>

Region 1 BF.7 (Omicron):
Percent Share in the selected week: 3.1% (Colored line in the line chart below)
95%PI in the selected week: 1.9-5.1% (Grey shaded area in the line chart below)

Nowcast for weeks ending 2022-09-03, 2022-09-10 and 2022-09-17:
These data include Nowcast estimates, which are modeled projections that may differ from weighted estimates generated at later dates



New COVID-19 variant's spread draws concern from CDC

Kevin Kavanagh, M.D., the president and founder of the patient advocacy organization Health Watch USA, has been closely following the pandemic since it first emerged. "This variant is obviously outcompeting our current major variants, but it is too soon to say whether it will have a significant impact on the United States," he told Fierce Healthcare. "Currently, regions of our country have different rates of vaccination and a different history of

exposure to past variants. Thus, the impact seen in one region does not translate to another, and it is anyone's guess if BF.7 rapid growth will continue." Kavanagh says that the emergence of new COVID-19 variants "is continuing evidence that herd immunity is not possible. With the high mutation and infection rates of SARS-CoV-2 we will continue to see viral evolution designed to avoid both natural and vaccine immunity. As we adapt, so does the virus. We must keep our immunity as high as possible and do everything we can to avoid reinfections with the concomitant risk Long COVID that can occur even in the young with mild disease." Fierce Healthcare.

Sept 21, 2022. <https://www.fiercehealthcare.com/payers/new-covid-19-variant-causes-concern>

Video Presentations & Written Comments

Comment for the Sept. 13, 2022, Presidential Advisory Council on Combating Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria (PACCARB) meeting.

Risk adjustment should only be performed when mitigation strategies cannot be implemented. It should not be used to normalize deviance or to mask or make poor performance acceptable. If risk adjustment is done, the raw data should be readily available to researchers and the public. https://www.healthwatchusa.org/HWUSA-Initiatives/PDF-Downloads/20220913-CDC_HICPAC-Meeting-Comment.pdf

Radio / Podcasts

COVID-19: Frontline Worker Safety Webinar & The Need for the BA.5 Booster

Dr. Kevin Kavanagh from Health Watch USAsm discusses the upcoming COVID-19 webinar which is free for all to attend on Sept. 14, 2022. There are an excellent number of world-renowned speakers including: Ambassador, Doctor Deborah Birx who will be discussing the pandemic response, Dr. Lidia Morawska who is one of Time Magazine's 100 most influential persons in the world for 2021 because of her work regarding the airborne spread of SARS-CoV-2 and how to make indoor places safe, and Past Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders. For a full agenda and list of speakers, along with registration information go to <https://healthconference.org>. Finally, Dr. Kavanagh stressed the need to obtain the BA.4/5 booster. Those who have had a double booster are 14 times less likely to die than the unvaccinated and 3 times less likely to die than the single boosted individual. In addition, boosters will help prevent the all-too-common occurrence of Long COVID. Jack Pattie Show. Sept. 8, 2022.

<https://www.healthwatchusa.net/Videos-JackPattie/20220908-JackPattie.htm>

COVID-19: Soap Works, Indoor Safety with Portable CO2 Monitors.

Dr. Kevin Kavanagh from Health Watch USAsm discusses the use of Soap and Water to disinfect for SARS-CoV-2 (the virus which causes COVID-19). The virus has a protein lipid capsule and new research shows it is deactivated with soap. Despite what the President says, the pandemic is not over. We are still losing 3000 individuals a week to COVID-19. We need to improve indoor circulation. The use of portable CO2 monitors to monitor indoor air quality can help identify unsafe environments. Ideally one wants to keep the CO2 below 700 ppm it is not uncommon for it to be above 1000 ppm. High CO2 is associated with poor airflow and is a risk for not only spreading diseases but also can affect cognition. Finally, we need to obtain our COVID-19 boosters. We are 73rd in the world in obtaining boosters with only 33% of our population boosted. Presentations from this year's conference can be viewed at <https://healthconference.org> Jack Pattie Show. Sept. 19, 2022.

<https://www.healthwatchusa.net/Videos-JackPattie/20220919-JackPattie.htm>

COVID-19: Boosters Help Prevent Long COVID

Long COVID is all too common and occurs in about 20% of COVID-19 cases. Heart palpitations and brain fog are symptoms which commonly persist. Boosters help prevent Long COVID but we are 70th in the world in obtaining boosters. One study found that overall 42% of unvaccinated people developing Long COVID, compared with receiving three doses of the vaccine, with only 16% develop Long COVID. In addition, you should avoid crowded, poorly ventilated indoor places especially during surges and if you are at high risk for severe COVID-19. Jack Pattie Show. Sept. 26, 2022. <https://www.healthwatchusa.net/Videos-JackPattie/20220926-JackPattie.htm>

COVID-19 Articles of Interest

Imagining COVID is 'like the flu' is cutting thousands of lives short. It's time to wake up

It is difficult to understand the ease with which we have accepted a major proportion of the Australian population getting infected with COVID in just a matter of months. Many have been infected multiple times, potentially exposing them to long COVID and other problems we are only beginning to understand. In the past 75 years, only the second world war has had a greater demographic impact on Australia than COVID in 2022. The Conversation. Sept. 14, 2022. <https://theconversation.com/imagining-covid-is-like-the-flu-is-cutting-thousands-of-lives-short-its-time-to-wake-up-190545>

Long COVID Was a Preventable Tragedy. Some of Us Saw It Coming

In the spring of 2020, I and other patient advocates warned that a wave of disability would follow the novel coronavirus. The National Academy of Medicine estimates that between 800,000 and 2.5 million Americans had ME/CFS (myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome) before the pandemic. Now, with billions of people worldwide having been infected by SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, the ranks of people whose lives have been upended by post-viral illness has swelled into nearly uncountable millions. Sept. 15, 2022 Medscape: <https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/980876>

BMJ: Long covid—an update for primary care

"In mid-2022, approximately 70% of the UK adult population had been infected with SARS-CoV-2.6 Of these, almost 2 million report covid-19 symptoms persisting for more than four weeks; 807 000 (41% of all people with long covid) for more than a year; and 403 000 (19%) for more than two years."

<https://www.bmj.com/content/378/bmj-2022-072117>

The Lancet Commission on lessons for the future from the COVID-19 pandemic

Executive summary: As of May 31, 2022, there were 6.9 million reported deaths and 17.2 million estimated deaths from COVID-19, as reported by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME; throughout the report, we rely on IHME estimates of infections and deaths; note that the IHME gives an estimated range, and we refer to the mean estimate). This staggering death toll is both a profound tragedy and a massive global failure at multiple levels. Too many governments have failed to adhere to basic norms of institutional rationality and transparency, too many people—often influenced by misinformation—have disrespected and protested against basic public health precautions, and the world's major powers have failed to collaborate to control the pandemic.

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(22\)01585-9/](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(22)01585-9/)

LaFraniere S. 'Very Harmful' Lack of Data Blunts U.S. Response to Outbreaks.

Major data gaps, the result of decades of underinvestment in public health, have undercut the government response to the coronavirus and now to monkeypox.

The C.D.C. has patched together other, disparate sources of data, each imperfect in its own way. A second database tracks how many Covid patients turn up in about 70 percent of the nation's emergency departments and urgent care centers. It is an early warning signal of rising infections. But it is spotty: Many departments in California, Minnesota, Oklahoma and elsewhere do not participate.

New York Times. Sept. 20, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/20/us/politics/covid-data-outbreaks.html>

Ky. hospital staffing shortages at 'unsustainable' level, hospital association says

Unveiling the results of the most comprehensive annual hospital workforce study to date on Thursday, KHA

President Nancy Galvagni said one in four licensed practical nursing positions are vacant in Kentucky, as are one in six nursing assistant jobs. Overall, more than 22% of nursing jobs are unfilled. Lexington Herald Leader. Sept. 29, 2022.

<https://www.kentucky.com/news/health-and-medicine/article266554051.html>

They Were Entitled to Free Care. Hospitals Hounded Them to Pay.

With the help of a consulting firm, the Providence hospital system trained staff to wring money out of patients, even those eligible for free care. Sept. 24, 2022. More than half the nation's roughly 5,000 hospitals are nonprofits like Providence. They enjoy lucrative tax exemptions; Providence avoids more than \$1 billion a year in taxes. Dr. Rod Hochman, Providence's chief executive, told an industry publication in 2021 that "'nonprofit health care' is a misnomer."

"It is tax-exempt health care," he said. "It still makes profits."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/24/business/nonprofit-hospitals-poor-patients.html>

Sept. 14th, 2022 Health Watch USAsm Webinar & Online Continuing Education



Frontline Worker Safety in the Age of COVID-19

Health Watch USAsm

Frontline Worker Safety in the Age of COVID-19 is a webinar and **now an online educational course** designed to update healthcare providers and facility managers on the unprecedented risks COVID-19 imposes on our workforce, along with how to mitigate these risks. World-renowned presentations are provided regarding the dangers Long COVID poses on our workforce, the importance of building ventilation, vaccinations and proper PPE to mitigate these risks, along with how disinformation has impeded an effective COVID-19 response. Speakers include Dr. Lidia Morawska, one of Time Magazine's 100 most influential people in 2021, for her work regarding aerosolization of airborne pathogens, Dr. Deborah Birx, past White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator, and Dr. Ziyad Al-Aly who will present his recent articles on Long COVID. The successful response in both Singapore and Australia will be discussed, along with misinformation regarding the impact and outcome of Sweden's response. Other topics include: Workplace violence, disparities, and the role of fomites in the spread of SARS-CoV-2.

Conference Online Objectives & Outcomes

Understanding important evidence-based strategies which have been learned during the COVID-19 epidemic.

- Identify infection control strategies that prevent and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 disease among both frontline workers and patients.

- Advise retailers, schools, and others on strategies they should undertake to establish a safe workplace which protects both frontline workers and patrons.
- Identify infectious disease infrastructure deficiencies in the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Discuss cultural and socioeconomic barriers and social disparities which place socially disadvantaged populations at increased risk of infection and severe disease.
- Explain the risks of disability and death from not only acute COVID-19 but also the disabling effects of Long COVID.

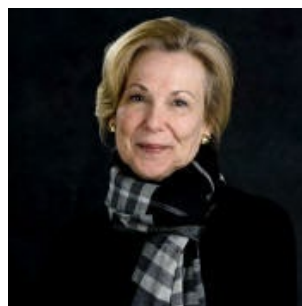
Speakers Included:



Past Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders, MD
– Introduction [View Video](#)



Professor Lidia Morawska, PhD, MSc. "Airborne infection transmission & Impact on Frontline Workers" Time Mag. Top 100 Most influential persons in the World for 2021. (Australia) [View Video](#)



Ambassador Deborah Birx, MD "COVID-19 USA - Lessons and new tools to improve workplace safety". Past White House Coordinator Coronavirus Response (USA) [View Video](#)



Professor Nele Brusselaers, MD, PhD "Evaluation of science advice during the COVID-19 pandemic in Sweden" (Sweden) [View Video](#)



Ziyad Al-Aly, MD An Overview of Long COVID” (USA) [View Video](#)

Online Continuing Education through Southern Kentucky AHEC is Now Available.

Enduring materials which are posted online have been approved for 6 credit hours of Category I AMA Continuing Education and ANCC nursing credits for 6 hours. In addition, 6 hours of continuing education is provided for Physical Therapy, Respiratory Therapy, Dentistry and Social Work. 7.2 hours of continuing education is provided through the Kentucky Board of Nursing. Radiology has been approved for 5.5 hrs. (Credits are pending for Occupational Therapy.)

For more information go to: <https://healthconference.org> .

To register for the above online course and obtain continuing education credits at No Charge through Southern Kentucky AHEC, go to: <https://sokyahec.thinkific.com/courses/frontline-worker-enduring>

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