



# Health Watch USA<sup>sm</sup> Newsletter

<https://www.healthwatchusa.org> Mar. 1, 2024

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

## **Activity for the Month of Nov. Health Watch USA<sup>sm</sup>:**

- 2 Articles/Op-Eds regarding COVID-19.
- 2 Presentations.
- 2023 HW USA Conference Videos are Available.

**Information Regarding Health Watch USA<sup>sm</sup> Nov. 1st, 2023: Long COVID's Impact on Patients, Workers & Society:** <https://healthconference.org>

## **Health Watch USA<sup>sm</sup> 2023 Activities Report:**

<https://www.healthwatchusa.org/HWUSA-Officers/20231231-HWUSA-Report-2023.pdf>

## **Health Watch USA<sup>sm</sup> 2022 Activities Report:**

<https://www.healthwatchusa.org/HWUSA-Officers/20221231-HWUSA-Report-2022-2.pdf>

## **Health Watch USA<sup>sm</sup> 2021 Activities Report:**

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

## **Health Watch USA<sup>sm</sup> 2020 Activities Report:**

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

## **Nov. 1st, 2023, Health Watch USA<sup>sm</sup> Webinar**



**Long COVID's  
Impact on  
Patients, Workers &  
Society  
Health Watch USA<sup>sm</sup>**

**Speaker Presentation Videos and PowerPoints Can Be Viewed**

**At: <https://healthconference.org>**

**To take the continuing education course (no charges apply) go**

**to: <https://sokyahec.thinkific.com/courses/longcovidimpact>**

# Health Watch USA<sup>sm</sup> - Peer-Reviewed Publications, News Articles & OpEds



## Importing drugs from Canada is an old idea with new political direction

"This is an extremely old Idea which I wrote about in my first Lexington Herald Leader Op Ed almost 20 years ago. The only difference is back then the idea was advocated by the left and anyone in opposition was obviously in the pockets of big pharma. Today, the political winds have reversed, and it is now being championed by the right. In 2004, I speculated that even with a 20% surplus, this strategy would only be expected to fill about 2% of the United States' needs. In today's post-pandemic environment with drug shortages and dependence on China for drug precursors, there is little hope of reimporting Canadian drugs. And why should Canada give their drugs to the United States when they have the political backbone to negotiate prices, and the strongest country in the world is trying to take the easy way out? And why would drug companies let this happen? Wouldn't they place export prohibitions in their contracts and limit sales commensurate with the country's needs? Little has changed since 2004, with the exception that the population of Canada appears to be growing faster than the United States'. But then this may be related to Canada's sound leadership taking decisive steps, such as negotiating drug prices for their citizens, rather than playing politics with their citizen's health and safety." Feb. 4, 2024. <https://www.kentucky.com/opinion/op-ed/article285063837.html>



## COVID-19 Realities: Beyond a Respiratory Virus, Addressing Optimism in Pandemic Management

*The CDC needs to give an unambiguous message about the urgent need for COVID-19 vaccinations and not one minimizing the disease by green-lighting the safety of asymptomatic spreaders mingling in our community.*

We should not be minimizing COVID by comparing it to RSV and flu. Not all airborne viruses are primarily respiratory. There is disagreement with this contention in the scientific community as to whether SARS-CoV-2 should be considered a respiratory virus since it affects every organ system of the body, and COVID-19 may be more of a neurological and cardiovascular disease than respiratory. The United Kingdom's workforce has been crippled with chronic illnesses, with 2.8 million of UK's citizens being inactive due to chronic illness. This figure has increased by 700,000 since the pandemic first started and corresponds to an equivalent decrease in workforce participation. We need to strengthen isolation requirements along with protecting the vulnerable. And we need to prepare for the next pandemic through increasing standards for ventilation and the use of N95 masks for all airborne pathogens. [References](https://www.infectioncontroltoday.com/view/covid-19-realities-beyond-a-respiratory-virus-addressing-optimism-in-pandemic-management) Infection Control Today. Feb. 28, 2024. <https://www.infectioncontroltoday.com/view/covid-19-realities-beyond-a-respiratory-virus-addressing-optimism-in-pandemic-management>

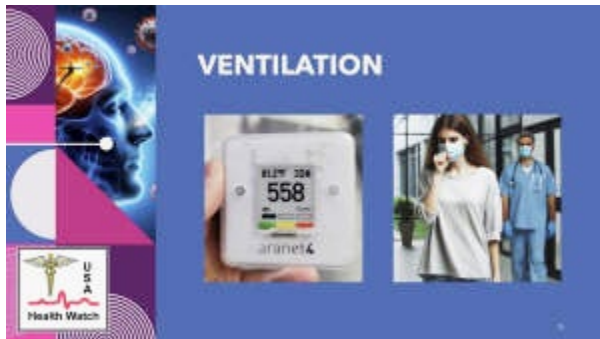
## Health Watch USA<sup>sm</sup> - Presentations



### How to Best Manage the Risk of COVID Infections While Seeking Healthcare

Dr. Kevin Kavanagh discusses several strategies to best manage the risks of acquiring COVID-19 while seeking medical care. The concept of minimizing the exposure dosage along with implementation of mitigation factors are discussed. Dosage is related to both the number of people you are in contact with along with the community level of SARS-CoV-2. Mitigation strategies

include the monitoring of indoor ventilation, the wearing of masks and vaccinations. Presentation to Mask Together American. Feb. 13, 2024. <https://youtu.be/VigfXZIHNAQ>



### Source Control Key to Prevent Spread of Infectious Diseases

Dr. Kevin Kavanagh from Health Watch USA(sm) discusses the importance of source control as it relates to ventilation, masking and isolation. He also discusses concerns with new proposals regarding the relaxation of isolation guidelines for COVID, MRSA and Measles. Finally, Enhanced Barrier Precautions and Chlorhexidine Bathing are discussed. Feb. 29, 2024. YouTube Video: <https://youtu.be/Aihijxt0HAc>

Download Slide Set: <https://www.healthwatchusa.org/HWUSA-Presentations-Community/PDF-Downloads/20240225-UofL-Spread-Final-2.pdf>

## Health Watch USA<sup>sm</sup> - Meetings



### Upcoming Meetings - Save the date

**Mar. 20, 2024 (noon meeting):** Sally Witcher, Healthcare Advocate from Scotland, and Jane Ormerod Long COVID Scotland, will present on the status of Long COVID in their country along with the potential impact and mitigation strategies.

**April 17, 2024 (7 pm):** Dr. Kaitlin Sundling: Impacts of COVID Infection and the Ongoing Pandemic in Pathology and Cancer Care.

**May 15, 2024:** Dr. Jacqueline Helcer Becker, Ph.D. Overview of the Impacts of Long COVID on Behavioral Health. Cognitive and Psychiatric Symptoms and Potential Mechanisms.

Space is limited. To attend any of these meetings, send an email to [kavanagh.ent@gmail.com](mailto:kavanagh.ent@gmail.com)

## Health Watch USA<sup>sm</sup> - Articles of Interest



### When and Why People Conceal Infectious Disease

"...we examined the prevalence and predictors of infection concealment in adult samples of U.S. university students, health-care employees, and online crowdsourced workers (total N = 4,110). About 75% reported concealing illness in interpersonal interactions, possibly placing others in harm's way. Concealment motives were largely social (e.g., wanting to attend events like parties) and achievement oriented (e.g., completing work objectives)."

People are inclined to hide a contagious illness while around others, research shows.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/09567976231221990?journalCode=pssa>

### US government failure to protect frontline workers from COVID led to thousands of deaths, scientists say.

"Some employers, with the support (and encouragement) of elected officials, put production and profits ahead of worker safety and health." Key messages:

*\* Covid-19 disproportionately affected workers who had to leave home and go to work to keep society functioning*

*\* Low wage Black and Hispanic workers were disproportionately represented among workers who could not work from home, and disproportionately affected*

*\* Actions by US occupational and public health agencies fell far short of what was needed to make workplaces safe during the pandemic*

<https://www.bmj.com/content/384/bmj-2023-076623>

### Institutional COVID denial has killed public health as we knew it. Prepare to lose several centuries of progress.

We can't talk about how we got to total state abandonment on COVID without discussing the billions of dollars that went into disinformation campaigns, pushing people to think of public health as an individual responsibility. <https://www.thegauntlet.news/p/institutional-covid-denial-has-killed>

### COVID-19 antivax quacks are now "repurposing" ivermectin for cancer

A year ago, I noticed that COVID-19 quacks were touting the "repurposing" of ivermectin to treat cancer. Now, familiar COVID-19 antivaxxers—cough, cough, FLCCC—have turbocharged this quackery.



<https://sciencebasedmedicine.org/covid-19-antivax-quacks-are-now-repurposing-ivermectin-for-cancer/>

## **Long-term symptoms after SARS-CoV-2 infection in a cohort of hospital employees: duration and predictive factors**

*Very interesting article. Half of Healthcare workers at three medical centers in Cologne Germany suffered from Long COVID (symptoms > 90 days)*

Results: "Of 221 included HEs, a number of 104 HEs (47.1%) reported at least one persisting symptom for more than 90 days after initial SARS-CoV-2 detection. Each one cycle higher initial Ct value significantly increased the chances of overcoming symptoms (odds ratio [OR] 1.05; 95% confidence interval (95%CI) 1.01–1.09;  $p = 0.019$ ). The occurrence of breathlessness within the first ten days (OR 7.89; 95%CI 1.87–41.43;  $p = 0.008$ ), an initial Ct value under 30 (OR 3.36; 95%CI 1.22–9.94;  $p = 0.022$ ) as well as the occurrence of anosmia or ageusia within the first ten days (OR 3.01; 95%CI 1.10–8.84;  $p = 0.037$ ) showed a statistically significant association with increased odds of illness duration over 90 days." BMC Infectious Diseases.

<https://bmcinfectdis.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12879-023-08710-1>

## **Attentional impairment and altered brain activity in healthcare workers after mild COVID-19**

This study included a high-risk healthcare population divided into groups of healthcare workers (HCWs) with mild COVID-19 (patient group,  $n = 45$ ) and matched healthy HCWs controls (HC group,  $n = 42$ ), who completed general neuropsychological background tests and Attention Network Test (ANT), and underwent resting-state functional magnetic resonance imaging (rs-fMRI) using amplitude of low-frequency fluctuation (ALFF) to assess altered brain activity; Selective impairment occurred in orienting and executive control networks, but not in alert network, in the patient group, and widespread cognitive impairment encompassing general attention, memory, and executive dysfunction. Moreover, the patient group had significantly lower ALFF values in the left superior and left middle frontal gyri than the HC group. SARS-CoV-2 infection may have led to reduced brain activity in the left superior and left middle frontal gyri, thus impairing attentional orienting and executive control networks, which may explain the development of attentional deficits after COVID-19. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11682-024-00851-4>

## **15% EU people reported memory and concentration issues**

In 2022, 14.9% of people in the EU reported moderate or severe difficulty with remembering or concentrating. Among the EU countries, the highest shares of people facing difficulties in remembering or concentrating were recorded in Finland (33.6%), Denmark (26.7%), the Netherlands (26.0%), Sweden (25.2%) and Estonia (24.9%). In contrast, the lowest percentages were reported in Cyprus (5.7%), Malta (6.5%), Ireland (7.3%), Bulgaria (7.9%) and Hungary (8.0%).

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20240129-1>

## **Nearly 1 in 4 American Adults Who Get COVID-19 Suffer From Long COVID**

(One needs to remember that at 3 months one would expect about 50% of individuals with long COVID to have permanent symptoms. )

"Analysis of the latest U.S. Census Bureau data finds 24% of U.S. adults affected by the disease have experienced COVID-19 symptoms for three months or longer. Learn which state and major metro area populations are experiencing the highest rates of long COVID."

<https://www.helpadvisor.com/community-health/long-covid-report>

## **Millions of Americans suffer from long COVID. Why do treatments remain out of reach?**

"Federal estimates suggest at least 16 million Americans have long COVID and maybe 4 million of them, like

Blatz, who contracted his only COVID infection in November 2022, are disabled by it. New research is published nearly every week, including recent studies showing that vaccines can reduce the risk of developing long COVID, that inflammation can disrupt the normal barrier between the brain and the rest of the body, causing brain fog, and that there are identifiable changes in the muscles of some people with long COVID, which could explain why exercise wears them out rather than making them stronger." USA Today: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/health/2024/02/26/long-covid-treatments-out-of-reach/72690587007/>

### **Predictors of non-recovery from fatigue and cognitive deficits after COVID-19: a prospective, longitudinal, population-based study**

(In a study of 2028 "individuals with a first-time positive polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test for SARS-CoV-2 who were at least 18 years old.." Only about half recovered from fatigue and cognitive deficits at 18 months.)

At baseline, 21% (95% confidence interval (CI) [20%, 23%]) had fatigue and 23% (95% CI [22%, 25%]) had cognitive deficits according to cutoff scores on the FACIT-Fatigue or MoCA. Participants with clinically relevant fatigue (at baseline) showed significant improvement in fatigue scores at follow-up (Hedges'  $g$  [95% CI] = 0.73 [0.60, 0.87]) and 46% (95% CI [41%, 50%]) had recovered from fatigue. Participants with cognitive deficits showed a significant improvement in cognitive scores ( $g$  [95% CI] = 1.12 [0.90, 1.33]) and 57% (95% CI [50%, 64%]) had recovered from cognitive deficits. Patients with fatigue exhibiting a higher depressive symptom burden and/or headache at baseline were significantly less likely to recover. Fatigue and cognitive deficits are common sequelae after SARS-CoV-2 infection. These syndromes improved over time and about half of the patients recovered within two years. The identified risk factors for non-recovery from fatigue and cognitive deficits could play an important role in shaping targeted strategies for treatment and prevention. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/eclinm/article/PIIS2589-5370\(24\)00035-X/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/eclinm/article/PIIS2589-5370(24)00035-X/fulltext)

### **Long COVID is associated with severe cognitive slowing: a multicentre cross-sectional study**

"Together, these results robustly demonstrate pronounced cognitive slowing in people with PCC (post-COVID-19 conditions), which distinguishes them from age-matched healthy individuals who previously had symptomatic COVID-19 but did not manifest PCC. This might be an important factor contributing to some of the cognitive impairments reported in patients with PCC....Cognitive slowing was evident even on a 30-s task measuring simple reaction time (SRT), with patients with PCC responding to stimuli ~3 standard deviations slower than healthy controls. 53.5% of patients with PCC's response speed was slower than 2 standard deviations from the control mean, indicating a high prevalence of cognitive slowing in PCC. This finding was replicated across two clinic samples in Germany and the UK. "

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/eclinm/article/PIIS2589-5370\(24\)00013-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/eclinm/article/PIIS2589-5370(24)00013-0/fulltext)

### **'Frustrated' businesses seek staff abroad as Britons abandon work**

"More than 5 million people are now on out-of-work benefits, up from 3.5 million back in 2015. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has found 2.8 million who say they are neither in work nor looking for a job because of long-term sickness.... The number of firms registering to become sponsors to hire abroad has doubled in the past two years as hundreds of thousands of Britons abandon work. More than 9 million people of working age have dropped out of the jobs market. The economically inactive population has increased by 884,000 since before the pandemic. Big jumps in wages have not persuaded enough of them to take one of the more than 900,000 vacancies on offer." The Telegraph.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/02/09/frustrated-businesses-staff-abroad-britons-abandon-work/>

## **Too many patients are catching COVID in Australian hospitals, doctors say. So why are hospitals rolling back precautions?**

"Twelve months later Australian hospitals have become a strange new battleground in the fight against COVID, with doctors and public health experts concerned that too many patients are catching the virus — and an alarming number are dying — as a result of inadequate infection control. Until recently, tools like contact tracing, testing, N95 respirators and good ventilation were mainstays of COVID management in healthcare settings. But in many hospitals, they've been wound back or ditched in tandem with other community protections, putting patients and healthcare workers at risk and deterring others from seeking treatment." Feb. 10, 2024 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-02-11/patients-catching-covid-hospitals-australia-infection-control/103442806>

## **One in 10 People With COVID During Pregnancy Will Develop Long COVID**

<https://www.medpagetoday.com/meetingcoverage/smf/108711>

## **Many young people (in Sweden) suffer from brain fog after the pandemic**

A fifth of respondents are worried about suffering from exhaustion due to brain fog (18 percent among men and 23 percent among women). In the 18-24 age group, this figure is 31 percent. The insurance company If has commissioned Syno International to investigate the extent to which different groups have been affected by brain fog. The survey shows that many, especially younger people between the ages of 18 and 24, are experiencing brain fog after the pandemic. In this age group, 32 percent experience brain fog. A total of 14 percent experience brain fog. <https://via.tt.se/pressmeddelande/3340271/manga-unga-lider-av-hjarndimma-efter-pandemin>

## **Gray Matter Thickness and Subcortical Nuclear Volume in Men After SARS-CoV-2 Omicron Infection**

Compared with pre-Omicron measures, we found a significant increase in symptoms of anxiety and a reduced ability to manage negative emotions in participants in the post-Omicron phase. One previous study showed that at least one-third of young adults exhibited depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress disorder during the first weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic, and these symptoms were found to persist for 3 months after recovery. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2812387>

## **Overview of the Impacts of Long COVID on Behavioral Health**

### **-- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration -- SAMHSA**

While anecdotal reports of symptom improvement have recently begun to emerge, there is also evidence that a subset of patients with Long COVID may endure persistent, long-term (i.e., at least 1 year after acute COVID-19 diagnosis) neurologic and psychiatric disorders.

A meta-analysis of studies around the world showed that the overall prevalence of depression, anxiety, and sleep disturbances among COVID-19 survivors was 45%, 47%, and 34%, respectively. Whereas, those levels were 33%, 31%, and 20%, respectively, in the general non-COVID population during the pandemic. A systematic review also found indications of cognitive impairment and at least one psychiatric disorder six months post-COVID-19 in approximately 56% of patients, with difficulty concentrating (24%) and generalized anxiety disorder (30%) being among the most prevalent Long COVID sequelae.

The mechanisms underlying cognitive dysfunction and mental health disorders in patients with Long COVID are still not entirely clear. Several hypotheses have been formulated to explain the impact of SARS-CoV-2 on

the central nervous system (CNS), including direct (e.g., viral invasion) and indirect (e.g., inflammation, hypoxia, vascular dysfunction) causes. In line with the behavior of prior coronaviruses and based on evidence from clinical, pathological, and molecular studies, it is possible that the virus may invade the brain via the olfactory nerve, which is responsible for sense of smell, thereby inducing CNS damage and neuroinflammation. However, this hypothesis remains controversial as most of the evidence has been from autopsy studies. Other investigations have failed to find viral proteins in cerebrospinal fluid of survivors.

A more likely explanation is that of systemic immune dysfunction, including neuroinflammation and autoimmune dysregulation, which can cause damage to the brain.

<https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/pep23-01-00-001.pdf>

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**Nov. 1st, 2023**  
**Health Watch**  
**USA<sup>sm</sup> Webinar**

## **Long COVID's Impact on Patients, Workers & Society**

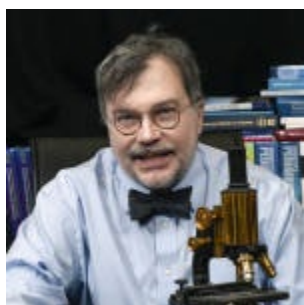
### **Health Watch USA<sup>sm</sup>**

**For More Information Go To:** <http://www.healthconference.org>

**Speakers for the Nov. 1st 2023 Webinar Include:**



**Ambassador Deborah Birx, MD** Past White House Coordinator Coronavirus Response (USA) "Impact of Long COVID on the United States".



**Peter J. Hotez, MD, PhD**, Dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine and Professor of Pediatrics and Molecular Virology & Microbiology at Baylor College of Medicine. will present on "Global Vaccines and Vaccinations: The Science vs The Anti-science." Dr Hotez will discuss the impact of developing new low cost and accessible vaccines for global health, including a recombinant protein COVID-19 "people's vaccine" now administered to more than 100 million adolescents and children in India and Indonesia. He will also discuss new trends in antivaccine sentiments in the US and an escalating and globalizing antisience empire.



## **Additional Presenters:**

**1. Pam Belluck**, New York Times Reporter -- Presentation: "How Long COVID is affecting people's jobs and their needs at work."

**2. Eleni Iasonidou, MD**, Pediatrician, Founder of Long Covid Greece and a one of the very first Greek representatives to join Long Covid Kids. Presentation: "Long Covid and its impact on children."

**3. Georgios Pappas, MD, PhD**, Physician, Researcher and Advocate. Specializing on zoonoses and preparedness against deliberate and natural outbreaks/ epidemics – Presentation: "Combating Disinformation regarding COVID-19 and Long COVID."

**4. Jane Thomason, MSPH, CIH**, Industrial Hygienist, National Nurses United & California Nurses Association -- Presentation: "The impact of Long COVID on Nurses."

**5. Greg Vanichkachorn, MD, MPH**, Occupational and Aerospace Medicine, Mayo Clinic-- Presentation: "Symptoms, treatment and rehabilitation of patients with Long COVID."

**6. Dr. Wilmore Webley**, PhD, University of Massachusetts, -- Presentation: "The effectiveness of vaccines to prevent Long COVID."

**7. Brian T. Walitt, MD, MPH**, Clinician with the NIH's National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. -- Presentation: "Neuropsychiatric manifestations of Long COVID & Chronic Fatigue Syndrome."

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**Download last year's summary white paper from 2022  
Worker Safety Conference (Journal of Patient Safety):**  
[https://journals.lww.com/journalpatientsafety/Fulltext/9900/  
Frontline Worker Safety in the Age of COVID 19 A.126.aspx](https://journals.lww.com/journalpatientsafety/Fulltext/9900/Frontline_Worker_Safety_in_the_Age_of_COVID_19_A.126.aspx)

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