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How Trust in a Covid Vaccine Eroded



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As Trump brags about rushing a covid vaccine through testing, record numbers of Americans say they won't get it. Gee, I wonder why. Will researchers have cut corners that result in dead vaccine recipients? Will scientists have vetted it for other dangerous side effects? Will it even work? These are legitimate questions, even for those of us who are not anti-vaxxers, who in fact believe in the life-saving efficacy of vaccines. New vaccines have rigorous testing protocols for a reason, and one is public trust. But Trump, his eye ever on boosting his sagging electoral prospects, even, for a while, claimed he would bust a vaccine through the approval process before the election. He was in a big rush. He thus appeared to throw serious science out the window. He couldn't have picked a worse time.

Two thirds of Americans say they won't get a covid vaccine when it first comes to market, according to *USAToday* in September. "One in four say they don't want to ever get it." The paper quoted one person saying, "I don't plan on being anyone's guinea pig." The newspaper also cited other surveys showing one third of Americans would decline the vaccine.

The Trump regime has managed to scare most Americans off taking a covid vaccine, by convincing them it politicized the science to rush it to market. People have concluded it may not be safe. So much for Operation Warp Speed. It turned into Operation Warp Distrust. So what if it provides 300 million vaccine doses by early 2021 – if few people take it, that's a waste of time and effort. *USAToday* quoted one expert saying, "you probably need between 70 and 80 percent of the population to get immune in order to really control COVID. And when I say immune, I mean both get the vaccine and the vaccine worked for them."

Which brings us to the second problem with this unprecedented hurry: the vaccine's efficacy. Back in August, Dr. Anthony Fauci called the chance of a covid vaccine being highly effective "not great." According to CNBC, a covid "vaccine that is...50 percent or 60 percent effective would be acceptable," Fauci said. Federal scientists regard 50 percent efficacy as a floor. Okay, so who will step up for a new vaccine that has been shoved through testing at a breakneck pace, with who knows how many risky shortcuts, and which could have dangerous side effects – in order to halve their chances of catching covid? "A 50 percent vaccine would be roughly on a par with those for influenza," CNBC reported, but below measles, which is roughly 93 percent effective. The difference is, we know these other vaccines are safe.

Fauci also worried about the "durability" of a covid vaccine, saying, "if Covid-19 behaves like other coronaviruses, it may not provide long-term protection." This could be a problem. There appear to be instances of people recovered from this pestilence who get reinfected. If people need a covid vaccine every few months, vaccine fatigue will set in really fast. And that's not all. Covid -19 may be something that a person contracts – for life; something that reappears periodically and cannot be eradicated. We haven't been around this plague long enough to know if this is so, but it can't be ruled out.

Fauci assured the public on September 30 that election year conflicts would not politicize scientific decisions about a vaccine. Really? This was after the FDA announced, in late September, tough new standards for vaccine emergency authorization, "as demanded by the normal approval process," according to *BMJ*, a healthcare professional publication. "By requiring phase III trials to run for at least two months after a booster dose, the process rules out a vaccine before election day." Then the Trump regime hysteria started.

Trump objected and called these FDA standards "a political move" – echoing his odd, jarring reference to various unnamed nefarious deep state actors within the FDA just a month earlier, in an unhinged August tweet that asserted the FDA was slow-walking vaccine research to undermine his reelection. That bizarre accusation reverberated again when he attacked the new standards. For those anxious that a vaccine was being jammed to market as a reelection

ploy, Trump's paranoid and peculiarly insinuating charges set off alarm bells. Had the inmates again taken over the asylum? Would science be perverted to suit an election schedule? Well, Trump threatened that the white house might not approve these new standards. Then on October 5, the white house did block these rules. The FDA published them anyway, and, to the relief of many, the white house backed down. These new rules by the FDA were intended to boost public faith in a covid vaccine, so that more people get it. Had the white house not relented, it would have undermined public trust.

"Public confidence in the FDA's vaccine review process has plummeted," Arstechnica reported on September 24, dropping from 72 percent in May to 51 percent in September. That plunge coincides with Trump's impatient and transparently political campaign to get the vaccine approved before the election. Trump scared the public away from the vaccine, and that's a problem, because the disease is on the upswing and still quite lethal.

The difficulty here is that the Trump regime put all its eggs in one hypothetical basket: vaccination. This was a fatally flawed strategy. Had the push for a vaccine accompanied a national plan to cope with covid, one that included aggressive use of the National Defense Production Act to produce needed medical equipment, a national mask mandate, rigorous national testing and contact tracing, intelligent use of lockdowns and a quick reinvestment in public health architecture – then Operation Warp Speed might have made sense. But none of this happened. As a result, the U.S. has more covid cases and deaths – about 216,000 – than any other country on earth. We have dealt with this pestilence far worse than any other country on the planet. The virus rages out of control. And we face the real possibility that a vaccine won't solve the problem.

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