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AND Notes: Vaccines for all and Rational Pharma Prices

On Friday, I had a joyous two-fer. I not only saw a patient face-to-face I had not seen in 1 ½ yrs. While she was vaccinated her fiancé (who was not a patient) was vaccine resistant. We got him on the phone right then and there and after responding non-judgmentally to many questions we scheduled the COVID vaccine for today, Monday! About 80% of my patients have received the vaccine. Those who do not want the vaccine are aided and abetted by [politicians](#), [clergy](#) and [the media](#). That doesn't mean that I give up. I am in constant communication with my patients but they offer no good reasons for resisting the vaccine. What can you say when states like [Tennessee strongly encourage vaccination of cows but not of humans](#).

The United States accounts [for more than one-fifth of the world's total COVID-19](#) cases for the first time since mid-February, before vaccines were widely available. The country reported more than 900,000 cases in a week for the first time since Feb. 4, while deaths surpassed 4,500 a week. Cases are rising in 46 states. Florida, Hawaii, Louisiana and Mississippi broke all-time case count highs last week, based on data reported Friday. Amazingly considering the [increasing cases among children](#), “[The Texas Education Agency](#) has said schools no longer need to conduct contact tracing, **nor are they required to notify parents of positive cases in the classroom.**” With respect to children and COVID, this is an [excellent guide for parents](#).

[Vaccination is key](#). Here is [how vaccines](#) make their impact. Where the vaccine is not available, the poor suffer and [children are suffering and dying](#) at a higher rate than wealthy countries. And now we have the [delta-plus variant](#). As per Dylan Scott, we have three groups of COVID patients: Unvaccinated people (the vast majority of hospitalizations and deaths), vaccinated people with symptoms (the vast majority are very mild but the immunocompromised are an important subgroup), and vaccinated people, [such as the NY Yankees](#), without symptoms.

Not only are health professionals [suffering](#) and dying from COVID, [burnout](#) is an ever present challenge. Health professionals in Mississippi have politicians who don't believe in science in a state with low vaccination rates with [resultant worst pandemic in the nation](#).

Overdoses during the pandemic increased by 30% to 92,000 while suicides actually dropped by about 10% to 44,000. Why, when these two tragedies typically go in tandem? The supply of fentanyl has actually gone up during the pandemic. Increased isolation and greater supply fentanyl are in part to blame for increased overdoses. But even though a great deal has been written about this divergence, we don't understand the reasons. Suicides and overdoses represents another tragedy that the U.S. has not effectively dealt with - period.

For the remainder of this year AND will continue to focus on exorbitant pharmaceutical prices and vaccine availability for the entire world. We need to allow CMS to negotiate prices with pharmaceutical companies, just like is done in every other country – industrialized or not. The Biden administration is in support. But this will be a very tough road politically. Even the National Academy of Sciences recently issued a report which a [number of experts concluded was “pharma-friendly”](#). I welcome all of you to be involved – please contact me with your ideas. Though the list will change, we are involved in the following states/districts.

Manchin (WV), Sinema (AZ), Menendez (NJ), Coons (DE), and Carper (DE). The most important House Dems right now are Reps. Scott Peters (Calif.), Jake Auchincloss (Mass.), Kurt Schrader (Ore.), Kathleen Rice (N.Y.), Stephanie Murphy (Fla.), Lou Correa (Calif.), Marilyn Strickland (Wash.), Frank Mrvan (Ind.), Josh Gottheimer (N.J.) and Tony Cárdenas (Calif.).

On improving vaccine access to the entire world (please get back to me if you are interested in working with me and other groups on this issue) as unless we protect the entire world we will not protect ourselves (I get it we are not even willing at this point to protect ourselves as a country).

But in the meantime, speak to everyone you know and ask them if they’ve been vaccinated. If not, in a gentle / generous way ask them if they have any questions. If you are unsure feel free to refer them to me – I’ve been speaking with people all over the country.