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## **AND on Podcast; Webinar In Prep for 2022 Elections; 4 1<sup>st</sup> Time Vaccinations 1 Day!**

We are continuing to build up health professional networks in preparation for the 2022 elections. As part of this effort, Jeff Lerner (AND lead in Pennsylvania) and I [appeared](#) on the Robert Hubbell podcast last week. *Hope to see you all next week on March 9 at 730 pm* when AND will [host](#) a webinar on Engaging Social Media and Policymakers as we build and prepare for the elections. Appearing will be

**Jeff Lerner** PhD, President Emeritus, ECRI and adjunct senior fellow, Leonard Davis Institute of Health Economics of the University of Pennsylvania; AND consultant; director of AND PA  
**Dan Stone** MD: Medical Director Cedars Sinai Hospital Los Angeles, CA AND Consultant  
**Gail Wilensky** PhD Project Hope and CMS Administrator President GHW Bush, AND Board of Advisors

It never happened to me before during this pandemic – out of the 23 patients I saw last Tuesday I had four who I convinced to get the vaccine. I failed at two others including one patient of mine. But I felt an incredible high; what a strange idea – again unique during my lifetime that I feel a sense of exhilaration at the end of the day having convinced four previously unvaccinated individuals to change their mind.

A [remarkable COVID statistic](#): in the six months between April and October 2021, the number of children experiencing the death of a parent or primary caregiver as a result of COVID-19 nearly doubled to more than 5.2 million globally - surpassing the total number of reported COVID deaths worldwide. The mental health and substance abuse impact is staggering. Just as I am writing this, I am working with a young mother using ten bags of heroin a day laced with fentanyl (she has Narcan) who is now in withdrawal and we are trying to convince her to switch to suboxone.

Many of you have heard of the [new CDC Covid guidelines](#). Bottom line, I will continue to wear masks when I go to the grocery store. As the Post [reported](#), instead of focusing on eliminating transmission of the virus, the framework is aimed at preventing hospitals and health-care systems from being overwhelmed and protecting people at high risk for severe illness, officials said.

Public health in the U.S. is deteriorating with public health officers [continuing](#) to leave their positions. Not surprisingly, private companies have [stepped](#) into this increasing void. After bankruptcy, the Detroit Public Health Department was privatized with [disastrous consequences](#). Trust is the [key](#). National public health system simply can't occur at this point in the US. But it can occur, I am

convinced, at a state level. I continue to have meetings in Massachusetts. Poor public health services exacerbates the social disparities impact of COVID. Here are some specifics: In Virginia, 41% of Medicaid enrollees 5 and older are vaccinated, compared with 76% of state residents in that age group. Sadly the new surgeon general in Florida is [not clear](#) that vaccines work and that [ivermectin doesn't](#).

Vaccines for all throughout the globe is a basic public health tenet. We are still falling short on this goal – both in terms of the [financial commitment](#) of all countries including the US and the willingness of countries such as the U.S. and Germany to [waive intellectual property](#) rights on the vaccine and allow countries to produce this life saving intervention at a lower cost.

Bob Herman from Axios gave a very nice [summary](#) of the overall challenges the U.S. health care system faces. An overarching issue is price. Take the example of hip replacement: Empire Blue Cross Blue Shield paid \$98,000; Cigna paid almost \$71,000; UnitedHealthcare paid \$66,000. Medicare paid around \$20,000. Most agree that Medicare payment is “reasonably.” But while Obamacare was a significant step forward, there is [no agreement](#) on next steps. Health professionals and voters will have a significant role. As we look to the 2022 election midterm elections AND continues to work on vaccines, public health and health system reform.

Reminder: join us if you can on Wednesday, March 9 at 7:30 p.m. Eastern time. We are beginning to build our health professional networks now in preparation for the 2022 elections. Hopefully you can either play a part for even 1 hour a month and/or know health professionals who are interested. Effective use of social media is key.

Just click on this on **Wednesday, March 9 at 7:30 p.m. Eastern** to join: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2548017298>.

Also, you will like the short 30-minute [podcast](#) that aired last week on the work of AND.

Norbert Goldfield, M.D.