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## **Airline Contact Tracing, Patient Vaccine Anger, We Can Pass This Legislation!**

When is airline travel discretionary? I have to go overseas for work in December – I don't consider that discretionary. My wife and I are going to Los Angeles in December – we typically go there every year as it is where we got married 43 years ago. We skipped 2020, had tickets for 2021 and cancelled at the last minute; and if we were leaving today, I would cancel again – for all the reasons that the Government Accounting Office highlighted in a report they issued this month entitled: [Contact Tracing for Air Travel: CDC's Data System Needs Substantial Improvement](#).

Workplaces throughout Los Angeles County are being hit hard by the latest coronavirus surge, with the number of reported case clusters nearly quadrupling since early May. The sharp rise is the latest wrinkle for efforts by companies looking to bring employees back on something resembling a pre-pandemic schedule. Among the areas to see infection clusters: **airports**.

People are not wearing masks. I went to a concert on Sunday where I was virtually the only masked person. I have not changed my behavior since the pandemic started: I mask up whenever I am inside a shared space and mask up when it is semi-crowded outside.

The coronavirus pandemic [caused the worst backslide](#) in global vaccination coverage in a generation. And COVID continues to mutate: According to [Nature](#): “The Omicron lineage of SARS-CoV-2 continues to evolve, successively yielding sub-variants that are not only more transmissible but also more evasive to antibodies.” But vaccines absolutely still help!! And I am relentless when I am with patients. My own few vaccine resistant patients are appreciative of my concern. But some patients who are not mine are different: After bringing up the vaccine at the end of a recent visit, one patient accused me of being paid extra for every patient who I convince to get vaccinated – I told this person that I found the comments insulting. I could feel the anger of another unvaccinated pregnant patient when I brought up the issue; I could easily imagine her [committing acts of violence](#) similar to what occurred on January 6 2020. Conservatives continue to advocate [limiting public health official power](#). On the other hand, credit where credit is due – the [Biden administration has facilitated](#) masks, medication and vaccines – for those who want it. More evidence of vaccine impact: [20 million lives](#) saved. Despite this: COVID-19 was the [third-leading US cause of death](#) between March 2020 and October 2021.

According to the [Post](#): The nationwide hotline for mental health emergencies switched to a simple [988](#) number on Saturday, a transition that is expected to bring millions more calls, chats and texts into a

system where readiness to handle the surge varies from place to place... The Wall Street Journal calculated recently that [1 in 6 callers hangs up without reaching anyone](#)... The number of suicides in the United States rose steadily from 29,350 in 2000 to 48,344 in 2018, before declining to 45,979 in 2020, [according to the National Center on Health Statistics](#).. Local centers are preferable, because staff there are better acquainted with nearby mental health resources. ‘Providing mental healthcare to people who need it the most is a voluntary act of government, and it shouldn’t be. It should be a legal requirement.’ [Darrell Steinberg, Sacramento mayor and mental health advocate](#).

National legislation currently being written is now focused on health care. The following issues all are op-ed/letter to the editor (LTE) possibilities; any health professional can participate using a partisan or nonpartisan slant; we can help!

*Drug pricing reform: the three key elements here are: Give Medicare the power to negotiate lower drug prices; Put an end to egregious price increases; Cap seniors’ out of pocket costs. The current thinking also creates \$300-\$400 B of savings that can be used to pay for the bill.*

*ACA Subsidies: maintains high subsidies for ACA insurance purchases put in place during Covid and allows more people to access those subsidies.*

*Non Medicaid Expansion States: provides 100% subsidies for eligible families to obtain ACA insurance in States that did not take Medicaid Expansion.*

The key to success on any LTE or Op-Ed is to make it personal – either your own story or a de-identified patient story re drug pricing. I and other Ask Nurses and Doctors consultants are happy to work with you at any stage of a draft.

The other topic is Roe. We need doctors and nurses, particularly in states that have passed restrictive legislation banning abortion to provide quotes or videos that say something like:

“I am a doctor/nurse – I took an oath to provide the best possible care to my patients. Politicians should not interfere with my caring for my patients and politicians should not threaten me and my healthcare colleagues with criminal charges if I fulfill the obligation of my oath as a doctor/nurse.”

We are happy to work with you and have a consultant help you on making a video/writing . Better yet, on August 3<sup>rd</sup> AND will host a national zoom for all health professionals on preparing for the fall campaign and tips on op-eds/LTEs and videos. We know many of you will be happily on vacation but hope that others of you can attend. It will be an hour well spent. Together we can make an impact on the legislation under development. We look forward to hearing from you and seeing you on August 3<sup>rd</sup>. Sign up at the link below; if you can't come and would like to listen to a recording just sign up and we will send you a link to the recording.

Norbert Goldfield, M.D.

**Zoom meeting:**

**Ask Nurses and Doctors – How To's on Getting Involved Now**

**When:** Aug. 3, 2022 08:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

**Register in advance for this meeting:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcsc-6rpj4oEtZeefSTM0uYjOY4T0MzOVvc>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.