



Norbert Goldfield, MD
Founder, CEO

Ask Nurses & Doctors LLC

72 Laurel Park
Northampton MA 01060
413-800-2680
norbert@asknursesdoctors.com
www.asknursesdoctors.com
@asknursesdoctors.com

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Beginning of 2023: Many Covid positive patients; 2 Hospitalized; An anti-vaxxer patient flips

New patients with Covid every week but by the time I find out their diagnosis it is too late to treat 50% of them. I haven't had any patients not willing to take Paxlovid. The few patients of mine who are anti-vaxxer are going to stay that way. But I still bring it up each time I speak with them. And one of them folded yesterday. I had discussed vaccination with him at least 20 times (he is in his 90s and has significant comorbidities). For him, Tuskegee was the main reason for his anti-vax philosophy. I offered to put him in touch with notable black physicians. Not interested. I then saw him yesterday as a follow-up to an ER visit and he said yes. Why did he flip – I just don't know. This [remarkable article](#) tells the story of how physicians practicing in rural North Carolina made a difference. Only 15% of eligible Americans (including [less than 50%](#) of nursing home residents!) are boosted, despite [research](#) showing that it cuts hospitalizations in half. And what happened to monkeypox or mpox? [Scientific investigation](#) sometimes doesn't provide clear answers.

This is a good [up to date article](#) on Covid and its new variant which is spreading throughout the country. The situation in China is [unfathomably sad](#). The protests certainly had an [impact](#).

There continues to be turmoil among health care workers. Nurses just [went on strike](#) (and just settled) at a number of NYC hospitals. Health professionals continue to be under tremendous stress. According to a NYT [investigation](#): “hospitals helped lay the groundwork for the labor crisis long before the arrival of the coronavirus. Looking to bolster their bottom lines, hospitals sought to wring more work out of fewer employees ... moved away from their charitable mission ... and skimmed on free care”. The allergist of a patient I saw yesterday quit last week. Let's not forget that hundreds of thousands of health care workers have [lost their lives](#) to Covid. Lastly, flu and RSV are rampant. I had a patient hospitalized and then intubated who had RSV.

With 40,000 hospitalized patients and 750 deaths per day in January 2023, this country still doesn't realize, as Eric Topol [asserted](#), that COVID is not done with us; though in the community I live in the schools [recommended](#) use of masks for a brief period of time right after the Christmas break. Congress has [provided little leadership](#) on Covid or on the next pandemic. Or as Rachel Cohrs opines: “After 9/11, Congress created an entirely new government agency to address the threat of terrorism, and Americans are still taking off their shoes in airports more than 20 years later. After a pandemic that

killed more than 1 million people in the United States alone, very little about the federal government has changed at all, and it may not for a long time.”

Social media continues to be rife with Covid [misinformation](#). So tragic and sad to read about the football player who collapsed on the field ten days ago and was happily just released home: “The [baseless tweets](#) began to circulate within minutes of Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin’s stunning collapse on the field during “Monday Night Football.” Anti-vaxxers and right-wing provocateurs sought to link the injury that left Hamlin in critical condition and the coronavirus vaccine, without any evidence.” And then in response to avalanche of Covid misinformation after the collapse and death of the journalist Grant Wahl at the World Cup in Qatar, his wife and notable infectious disease specialist, Celine Gounder, [responded in a dignified manner](#) . Quoting at length but please consider reading the entire article:

The vaccine disinformation playbook includes the use of fake experts, logical fallacies, impossible expectations, cherry-picked data and conspiracy theories. Not a single qualified medical or public health expert has supported the claim that my husband died from Covid vaccination ... When disinformation profiteers leverage tragedies like Grant’s and Mr. Hamlin’s for their personal gain, they retraumatize families, compromise our ability to interpret information and distinguish truth from lies and put all of us at risk. The results of allowing this to continue will be disastrous. Merchants of disinformation argue that vaccines killed my husband, but they’re also at least in part responsible for the return of polio to the United States and the fact that so many children in Ohio are suffering from measles right now....Grant will be remembered for his kindness, openness and generosity. His legacy is his commitment to seeking truth through reporting, supporting human rights and fighting for equality. I will continue to honor Grant by living by our shared values. I’m channeling my grief into something productive: protecting the public’s health against those who would profit from the suffering of others.

The State of Florida Surgeon General, Joseph Ladapo, [is one of the worst purveyors](#) of Covid misinformation when he used flawed science to recommend that young men not receive the Covid vaccine. And yet neither the University of Florida where Ladapo is also a tenured professor nor the Florida Medical Licensure Board feels it is appropriate to censure or discipline him. Even though [he wasn’t always anti-vax](#), Governor Ron DeSantis is [in charge of this misinformation](#) (despite the fact that this approach is [killing Republicans](#) more than Democrats!). In contrast, GOP Governor Asa Hutchinson of Arkansas [defends science!!](#)

In terms of my own behavior, I am still [wearing a mask](#) at my practice but also in any large gathering inside. And with respect to Ask Nurses and Doctors (AND) , I together with AND leaders in several states are putting together a one pager that we will use as a basis for interviews with a number of you. By June we hope to have a preliminary 2024 AND election year strategy. We look forward to involving many of you and welcome all your ideas on what you think health professional groups such as AND should be pursuing in 2024. Certainly, availability of affordable health insurance will likely be one

winning issue; please read [this article](#) about Republican leaning Miami residents wildly in favor of Obamacare. For sure, we will also raise the fact “Covid is still not done with us.”

Norbert Goldfield, M.D.