

# The CDC Credibility Crisis. “Loss of credibility in our top public health agencies”

By [Full Measure](#)

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Since posting, it would appear that the video is no longer available

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## Transcript of Video

*There are many hot-button topics in the midterm elections that are in some way linked to the Covid response. The economy. Education. Government censorship and control.*

*Today, we confront one of the thorniest issues to arise from the pandemic: the massive loss of credibility in our top public health agencies.*

President Joe Biden (July 30):

Hey folks, Joe Biden here. Tested positive this morning

When President Biden caught Covid for the second time

President Biden: I am feeling fine, everything is good.

He won a place in an unlucky trifecta.

Biden, top Covid adviser Anthony Fauci, and the head of vaccine-maker Pfizer had all insisted the vaccines would prevent Covid. Among them, they now count at least 14 shots — and 6 bouts with Coronavirus. Living symbols of the lapses, confusion, and government misinformation that mark America’s long Covid nightmare.

President Biden (January 4):

So, there’s no excuse — no excuse for anyone being unvaccinated. This continues to be a pandemic of the unvaccinated.

In the beginning, Americans put their full faith in public health officials.

Dr. Anthony Fauci (March 2020, CNN):

That's no time to pull back. That's when you need to hunker down, nail down, mitigate, mitigate, mitigate. Get the people taken care of. That's what you've got to concentrate on.

But "15 days to slow the spread" turned into an ordeal with unthinkable costs still being paid. Economic fallout, destroyed education, shuttered businesses, lost jobs, and Covid ravaged the country all the same.

Too often, the public watched as their top experts seem to be the last to admit the obvious. Multiple cringeworthy moments and false claims were provided by Dr. Rochelle Walensky, head of the Centers for Disease Control.

Dr. Rochelle Walensky (March 29, 2021, MSNBC):

Our data from the CDC today suggests you know that vaccinated people do not carry the virus, don't get sick.

Just this past week, after a reported five Covid vaccinations, CDC announced Walensky's second bout with Covid in a 9-day period.

In one of public health's most urgent moments — after trillions of tax dollars and decades spent preparing — CDC became a punchline.

Sharyl: The idea that the premier health agency in the world didn't know what to do when a pandemic broke out and put out wrong information so often, that's really been harmful.

Dr. Jay Bhattacharya: I completely agree.

Dr. Jay Bhattacharya is a professor at the Stanford School of Medicine. He helped lead thousands of scientists early on in endorsing a different approach: instead of shutdowns, isolate those at most risk, and let others lead normal lives.

Emails later revealed top public health officials conspired to smear Bhattacharya and his colleagues for veering from the narrative. The head of the National Institutes of Health, Dr. Francis Collins, wrote Fauci of the need for "a quick and devastating published take down" of Bhattacharya's ideas.

Bhattacharya: It just reeks of scientific incompetence or the manipulation of science in order to get their desired policy ends. Probably the most egregious is this denial of natural immunity. Places like the CDC have argued that there is no proof or evidence of essentially protection against future Covid exposure after you're Covid-recovered. No natural immunity. And so, by denying this fact about the immunity, people in the real world are not dumb. And they say, "Well, why are they saying this false thing to me? What else are they saying to me that's false?"

Congressman Tom Massie exposed another shocking example of false information coming

from CDC, as we reported last year. Massie caught top CDC leaders and scientists claiming that original studies showed people who'd had Covid would still benefit from getting vaccinated. That wasn't true.

In phone calls Massie recorded, CDC officials promised they'd fix their disinformation. Instead, they continued to spread the false claims here, in a seminar aimed at medical professionals.

Dr. Sara Oliver (CDC video): "...Data from both clinical trials suggests that people with prior infection are still likely to benefit from vaccination."

Over the summer, keenly aware of the widening credibility gap, Walensky conducted her own review of CDC's Covid response. She concluded her agency had failed miserably in its biggest moment.

Walensky (August 10, CBS News): We made some pretty public mistakes, and we need to own them.

Walensky found that to move forward, CDC must align incentives with public health action and impact, improve internal coordination, implement new governance with an emphasis on the core capabilities and accountability at all levels, and upskill and train toward a response-capable agency.

Still, the inside review fell far short of the top-to-bottom makeover envisioned by critics and even by one of CDC's longtime supporters.

Lawrence Gostin: I'm really worried about CDC's credibility.

Lawrence Gostin heads up the World Health Organization's Center on Global Health Law.

Gostin: CDC does need an overhaul.

Sharyl: I'm a little surprised to hear you agree with some of CDC's harshest critics in that an overhaul is needed.

Gostin: Yeah. I mean, it's always better to have suggestions for reform from a close and dear friend. And I am as close and as dear a friend to CDC as anybody could be. Everybody knows things have to change, and they do.

Sharyl: What could they have done to not end up in a place where they lack so much public trust today?

Gostin: Yeah. I mean, it's hard. I mean, I know so many of the public health leaders at CDC, and I'm very good friends with Tony Fauci. But nobody escaped unscathed. And there were times when the agency just literally misstepped. It misfired.

Sharyl: When you say CDC could use an overhaul, what would you envision, something realistic?

Gostin: What I want to see is, you know, the best public health minds in the country doing an independent, open report — a retrospective on CDC's performance during COVID, and what it needs to do now.

Right now, with no CDC overhaul or outside review underway, politicians are threatening to step in.

House Republican leader Steve Scalise says the public's loss of confidence extends well beyond the CDC to the FDA and other government agencies that had a role in the problematic Covid response.

Sharyl: How can this credibility gap that's developed be fixed? And is there anything that members of Congress — particularly if Republicans regain control in November — is there anything that can be done about it?

Rep. Steve Scalise: Well, we're going to be ready to go day one. And if we're in the majority, we will have hearings to get those facts out, but then go and restore the credibility of those agencies by taking away that power to just unilaterally control people's lives and get back to the science — what used to be their main focus, that got thrown out the window when people politicized it because they wanted to use government to control people.

Sharyl: Looking ahead, let's say there's another pandemic or big public health emergency with the federal agencies in the same state as they're in today. Where do you think that leaves us?

Bhattacharya: I think we're in a very, very bad state. We have to reform each of these agencies pretty fundamentally. We're going to need to have a very honest look at the problems in this pandemic, almost like a 9/11 style commission.

Gostin says President Biden is in the driver's seat.

Gostin: In terms of having an independent, scientific public health inquiry on lessons learned from Covid and overhauling the CDC, he can do that. He's the head of federal agencies in the United States. He could do it, and he should do it. And he should do all he can to make the CDC a really robust and shining agency, just like that shining agency on a hill that CDC used to be. We need to get back there.

Sharyl (on-camera): CDC declined our interview requests. The agency's record budget request for next year includes \$25 billion for a new adult vaccination program, \$28 billion more for pandemic preparedness, which had already been funded by the trillions prior to Covid.

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