

Whopper of the Week: RFK Wants You to Fortify Your Immune System So He Can Deprive You of Modern Medicine

IN SUMMARY:

Secretary Kennedy told [Joe Rogan](#) in 2023, “It’s hard for an infectious disease to kill a person with a rugged immune system.” According to Kennedy, healthy people don’t need vaccines to avoid disease, they should “[fortify](#)” their immune system. The “root cause” of infectious disease, in this view, is not the pathogen but the individual. That’s why, as Secretary of Health, Kennedy is now denying people access to modern medicine. His approach is a form of eugenics, where those who survive are praised as strong and those who succumb to disease are written off as weak.

"Miasma theory emphasizes preventing disease by fortifying the immune system through nutrition and reducing exposures to environmental toxins and stresses." -- Robert F. Kennedy Jr., *The Real Anthony Fauci: Bill Gates, Big Pharma, and the Global War on Democracy and Public Health*

WHY IS THIS A WHOPPER?

In his 2021 [book](#) about the COVID pandemic, Secretary Kennedy minimized the seriousness of COVID and criticized the use of vaccines. Kennedy tried to set up “Miasma versus Germ Theory” as a modern scientific controversy. Miasma theory dates to ancient Greeks who believed putrid smells, or ‘bad air,’ from rotting matter caused disease when it entered the body. In the 19th Century, it served as a justification for sanitation reforms in cities, which did improve health by reducing the risk of an infectious disease passing from person to person. Kennedy mixed miasma with [terrain theory](#), another 19th Century idea, in which the body’s internal “terrain” determines whether or not you get sick. Terrain theory has been resurrected by Kennedy and [others](#) to mean that good nutrition, exercise, sleep, and avoiding toxins and stressors can help the body avoid illness. There is a grain of truth in the belief that “taking care of yourself will help your immune system take care of you,” as the [CDC](#) now says, but terrain theory incorrectly minimizes the role of pathogens in disease.

For the last [150 years](#), micro-organisms have been widely recognized as the cause of infectious diseases. Joseph Lister, Louis Pasteur, and Robert Koch laid the scientific groundwork that demonstrated that “germs” in the form of bacteria, viruses, and fungi, invisible to the human eye, were responsible for rot and fermentation in food, infections in hospitals, and pandemics in the population. Scientific experiments have since established causation --the variola virus causes [smallpox](#), the human immunodeficiency virus causes [AIDS](#), SARS-COV-2 virus causes [COVID](#)-- for hundreds of infections. Epidemiological studies have also shown that

viruses can lead to chronic diseases like Long COVID (from SARS-CoV-2) and cancers of the liver (from hepatitis B virus).

Today, multiple fields of research and clinical care have their roots in germ theory, including: microbiology, virology, epidemiology, immunology, and infectious disease medicine. Scientists in these fields have published hundreds of thousands of research papers. Their work has led to the development of [vaccines](#), treatments, and environmental interventions that together prevent or control infections. The germ theory of disease was revolutionary in the late 19th century. It is so broadly accepted in the 21st century that it is just textbook high school biology.

The "root cause" of infectious diseases are dangerous pathogens. Being young and healthy is no guarantee of being able to avoid or survive an infection. The [1918 Influenza](#) pandemic killed 50 million people world-wide, and it was healthy young adults, not their parents, who were at higher risk. [Rabies](#), once symptoms appear, is fatal. AIDS, if left untreated, kills 90% of people infected. Even measles, which has a 1% to 3% case fatality rate, killed several hundred children each year before the vaccine. For many diseases, there is nothing you can personally do --no amount of healthy eating, exercise, or avoidance of stressors-- that will fully protect you from infection. Vaccines are the most effective way to prevent many infectious diseases.

WHY IT MATTERS:

Most health care experts agree with Kennedy that a healthy diet and lifestyle, as well as avoiding environmental toxins and stressors, improves overall health. But Kennedy's dismissal of germ theory and refusal to promote vaccines is where his views on miasma cause medical harm. As Secretary of Health, he's using his office to limit access to routine vaccines for children, pregnant women, and non-elderly adults. Other policies are also in jeopardy because he is "[taking a break](#)" from infectious diseases. There have been cuts to:

- Monitoring of food-borne pathogens
- Federal communication and assistance to states during outbreaks of measles and whooping cough
- Pandemic preparedness programs, including the stockpiling of medicines, diagnostics and protective equipment in advance of outbreaks
- Global programs for the prevention and treatment of AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria

Kennedy's outdated ideas are hurting Americans. Everyone is susceptible to infections. It is not within the power of those who are disabled or immuno-compromised, or those who face socioeconomic adversity, to "fortify" their immune system on their own. The vulnerable are those at most risk when Kennedy restricts vaccines, monitoring programs, disease detectives, public health announcements, and other policies that we all have come to rely on and that protect our country from the inevitable and constant circulation of dangerous pathogens.

Contributors to this post are: Benedicte Callan, Ph.D., Aurora Horstkamp, M.D.; and Erica Bersin, B.C.P.A.