

Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations

Hearing on “How the Corruption of Science has Impacted Public Perception and Policies Regarding Vaccines”

Ranking Member Richard Blumenthal Opening Statement

September 9, 2025, 2:00 p.m.

Welcome to everyone. Whether you agree or disagree, this hearing is not personal between Senator Johnson and myself, between any of you and the witnesses.

This hearing is about the “corruption of science.” I agree that we are witnessing the corruption of science. It is happening before our very eyes, in real time. Maybe, more accurately, it should be titled, The Denial and Degrading of Science. When the Senate-confirmed director of the CDC is fired because she refuses to fire officials or approve unscientific vaccine guidance without evidence, that is the corruption of science.

When the indisputable determination that greenhouse gases pose a threat to human health is rescinded and clean energy projects are canceled in favor of pollution-heavy coal, that is the corruption of science. When the CDC’s measles risk forecast is suppressed in the middle of the worst measles outbreak in decades, that is the corruption of science.

Overriding on going corruption of science is to deny safe and effective vaccines, that discourages people from making use of them to save lives and keep our kids healthy.

The Trump Administration’s corruption of science is unprecedented in our country’s history. Our committee has analyzed the ways in which the Trump Administration has interfered with science in just its first eight months and found 57 separate, discrete instances of corruption of

science. Without objection, I would like to enter this staff memorandum into the record.

Since President Trump took office in January, Secretary Kennedy and other Administration officials have silenced scientists, halted research, crippled our public health infrastructure, and politicized institutions that were once renowned the world over for adherence to non-partisan, science-based recommendations.

They have also demonized vaccines and taken steps that will make it harder for Americans to access them, depriving Americans of basic public health tools. And less than two weeks ago, President Trump fired CDC Director Susan Monarez—barely a month after she was confirmed by this body, the United States Senate—because she refused to go along with Secretary Kennedy’s demands about changing vaccination policy.

This is an administration not only wants to consult people who will tell it what it wants to hear, but denies others who have accurate fact-based words that should be heard. That is not science, that is zealotry. It is an obsessive distortion of facts. And an adherence to conspiracy theories over science.

Secretary Kennedy is creating a public health system that puts allegiance to his dogma over health and safety. Just last week, more than 1,000 present and former HHS employees wrote an open letter calling for him to step down, stating that he is, quote, “endangering the nation’s health by spreading inaccurate health information.”

Without objection, Mr. Chairman, I would like to enter that letter into the record.

I certainly concur with their conclusion. A charlatan like RFK Jr. has no place in our government or anywhere near public health. I am deeply fearful of the consequences for our country if he remains in charge and unscientific rhetoric, corruption of science, continues to rule the day and be perpetuated by those in leadership positions.

So, I have some questions. How many preventable diseases will become out of control because people cannot or will be discouraged from getting vaccines? How many advances in science and medicine will we miss out on because the NIH is cut in funding and research is impeded? How many public health workers will lose their jobs? Public health workers who could save lives and help. I deeply fear for the future of public health in our country, because of the corruption of science.

On August 8, a gunman fired nearly 200 rounds of ammunition into the CDC's headquarters in Atlanta allegedly over his anger about the COVID-19 vaccine. One heroic police officer tragically lost his life.

Dr. Robert Malone, one of the new members of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, or ACIP, appointed by Secretary Kennedy after he fired all of the sitting members, made multiple statements that appear to threaten violence against scientists and public officials before and after this shooting.

This is an image that Dr. Malone posted. This image, just hours before the shooting—a revolver loaded with a single bullet and the words, quote, “Five out of six scientists have proven that Russian roulette is harmless.”

This was apparently not enough for Dr. Malone, because less than 48 hours after the shooting had occurred, he posted several other violent images, including ones apparently threatening politicians and one seen here with an image of an automatic weapon with the words, quote, “the second amendment was not written in case the deer turn against us.”

I wrote to Secretary Kennedy in the wake of these posts and demanded he fire Dr. Malone. I am deeply disappointed and disturbed that I have not even received a response. I would like my letter of August 13 to Secretary Kennedy to be entered into the record, if there’s no objection.

Chairman Johnson, I would ask that you join me in my demand that Dr. Malone be fired. Violence and violent rhetoric should not be tolerated. That is corruption of science. Rhetoric has consequences. Misinformation has consequences. And the failure to respect real science *will* deprive all Americans of treatments and cures.

And before my time is up, Mr. Chairman, I want to acknowledge the study that will be discussed by the majority at this hearing.

Citing the fact that one deeply flawed study was not published as evidence of a cover-up ignores the thousands of others contradicting its findings. In fact, as you probably know, there have been 3,000 published studies of vaccines. 1,000 since 2020, showing vaccines are safe and effective. The estimate is that thousands of lives have been saved by vaccines and illness prevented.

I am looking forward to hearing from Dr. Jake Scott—an infectious disease specialist from Stanford, by the way, the only doctor on this panel—and why no reputable journal would or should ever publish that study.

It pains me, frankly, that unscientific studies like this are being promoted in this Committee, purporting to be scientific fact.

And I fear that this work will only further undermine our already shaken public health system. But in the meantime, I want to thank all of the public health workers at the federal and state level who continue to do your job day in and day out, despite the discouraging atmosphere here in Washington. And in some cases, despite these kinds of intolerable threats that should merit the firing of Dr. Malone. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.