

# **Assaults on science causing alarming and avoidable deaths in the U.S.**

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COVID-19 is now the third leading cause of death in the United States only behind cardiovascular disease and cancer. The U.S. accounts for more than 20 percent of COVID-19 cases (more than 7.7 million) and deaths (more than 210,000) in the world today while comprising 4.25 percent of the global population.

In a commentary published online in *EClinicalMedicine*, researchers from Florida Atlantic University's Schmidt College of Medicine and collaborators state that "pandemic politics" is causing assaults on science, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as well as the health of the public.

As an example, the authors point out that the FDA, a world renowned regulatory authority issued an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for hydroxychloroquine in the absence of any reliable data from large-scale randomized trials, all of which later showed no benefit and some showed clear harm. According to the authors, what is even more disturbing is the escalation of the politicization of the CDC, formerly a role model for disease control and prevention activities worldwide. They state that during COVID-19, the CDC issued reopening guidelines after initial lockdowns that lasted only until the epidemic curve flattened, violating their own principles to continue until cases and deaths drastically fell. On Aug. 25, the CDC apparently updated guidelines excluding exposed but asymptomatic individuals from testing. Then, on Sept. 17, it was revealed that White House officials edited and published guidelines despite CDC objections.

Finally, with respect to the health of the U.S. public, the authors note that while the president of the United States publicly issued repeated denials while calling the pandemic a "hoax," he privately stated in a recorded interview that COVID-19 "was more deadly than even your strenuous flu."

"Unfortunately and tragically, the U.S. had been judged in early 2016 to have been best prepared for the [existential threat](#) of a pandemic, but turned out to be the least prepared for the actual threat in early 2020," said Scott M. Alter, M.D., M.B.A., first author, an emergency medicine physician, and an assistant professor in the Department of Integrated

Medical Sciences in FAU's Schmidt College of Medicine.

The authors also state that the politicization of the FDA and CDC is producing continued losses of trust by the U.S. public as well as continued harm to their longstanding reputations of respect and admiration worldwide.

"The anticipated number of deaths from COVID-19 may become comparable to the most lethal epidemic of influenza in U.S. history, which occurred from 1918 to 1919 when approximately 675,000 Americans died," said Charles H. Hennekens, M.D., Dr.PH, senior author, first Sir Richard Doll Professor and senior academic advisor in FAU's Schmidt College of Medicine. "In stark contrast to both the current U.S. epidemic of COVID-19 and the Spanish Flu of 1918-19, the 2018-19 flu season affected about 42.9 million Americans, of which about 61,200 died."

Hennekens added, "As competent and compassionate healthcare professionals, we must redouble efforts to combat pandemic politics and promote evidence-based clinical and public health practices and discovery research."

The authors underscore that the U.S. has become and will very likely remain the epicenter of the pandemic worldwide. They say that if the past is prolog then pandemic politics concerning vaccine development will potentially lead to another premature EUA by the FDA in the absence of reliable evidence. They further state that it is more imperative than ever that the U.S. abandon [pandemic](#) politics and focus solely on effective public health strategies.

"In the U.S., there is an urgent need for a unified national approach for the implementation of effective public health mitigation strategies, predominantly social distancing, masking, avoidance of crowds, as well

as frequent hand and face washing," said Alter.

**More information:** Scott M. Alter et al. The menacing assaults on science, FDA, CDC, and health of the US public, *EClinicalMedicine* (2020). [DOI: 10.1016/j.eclinm.2020.100581](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eclinm.2020.100581)

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