

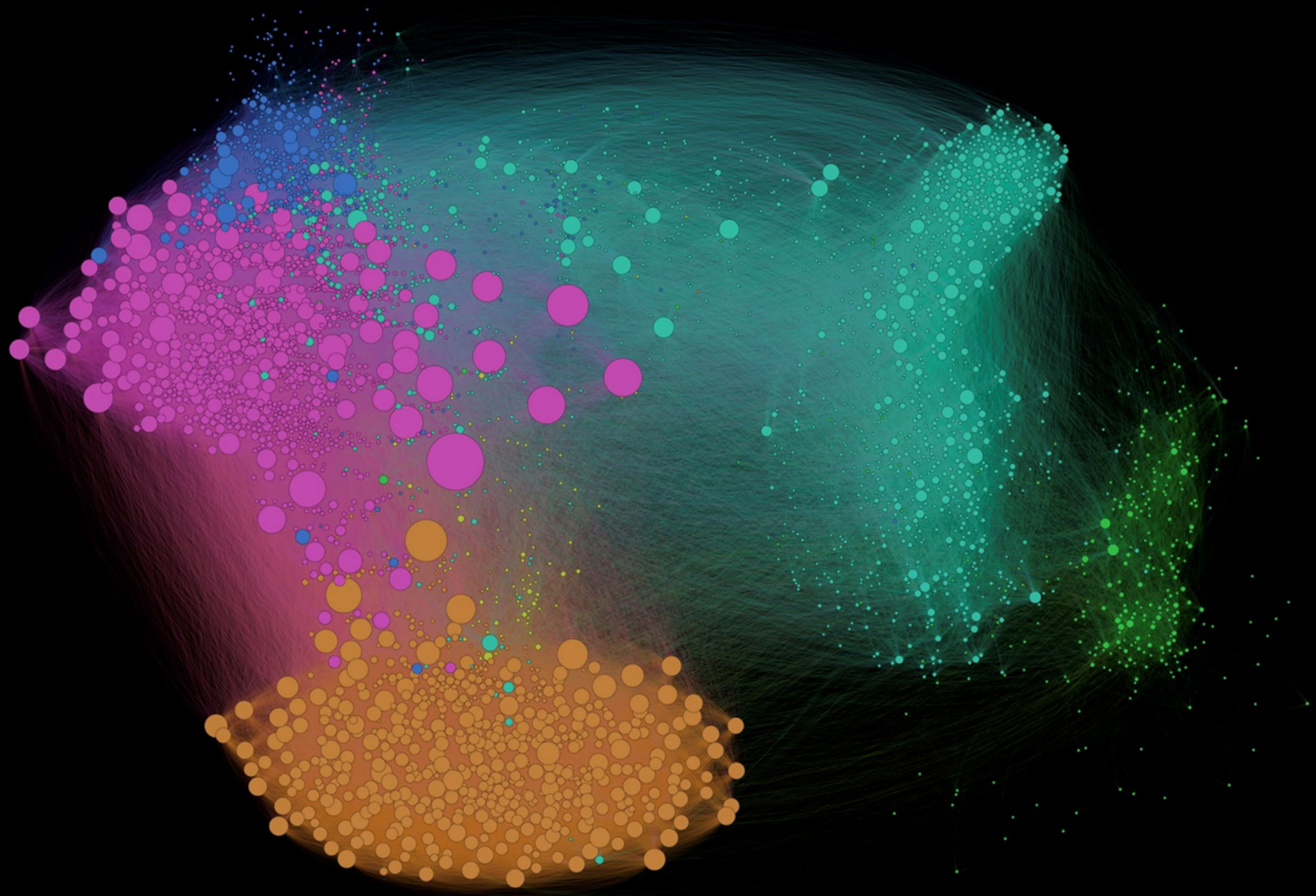
CONTAGIOUS RUMORS

in the

TIME *of* COVID

@noUPSIDE

RENEE DIRESTA



1

**ANTI-VACCINE NARRATIVES ARE
VERY OLD, BUT THE WAY THEY
SPREAD HAS CHANGED**

2

**THAT CHANGE IS CO-OCCURRING
ALONGSIDE SOCIAL SHIFTS,
INCLUDING A DECLINE IN TRUST**

3 THESE DYNAMICS REQUIRE A DIFFERENT TYPE OF RESPONSE. WE ARE NOT GOING BACK TO THE OLD WAY SO IT'S TIME TO ADAPT



MISINFORMATION



DISINFORMATION



VIRAL RUMORS



ZERO-COST PUBLISHING

+



AUDIENCE CONSOLIDATION

+



ALGORITHMIC CURATION

+



PERSONALIZED TARGETING



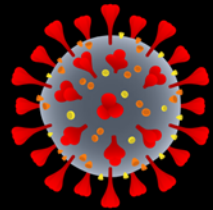
NETWORK EFFECTS

+



ENGAGEMENT

+



VIRALITY & VELOCITY

+



GAMEABLE ALGORITHMS



**THE POWER TO INFLUENCE OPINIONS
INCREASINGLY LIES WITH THOSE WHO
CAN MOST WIDELY AND EFFECTIVELY
DISSEMINATE A MESSAGE.**

 **TRUST**

 **CONFIDENCE IN INSTITUTIONS**

 **AFFECTIVE POLARIZATION**

 **CONTENT GLUT**

 **ATTENTION**

**INFLUENCE AND EXPERTISE HAVE
BEEN DECOUPLED**

COVID-19 VACCINE *narratives*
A CASE STUDY

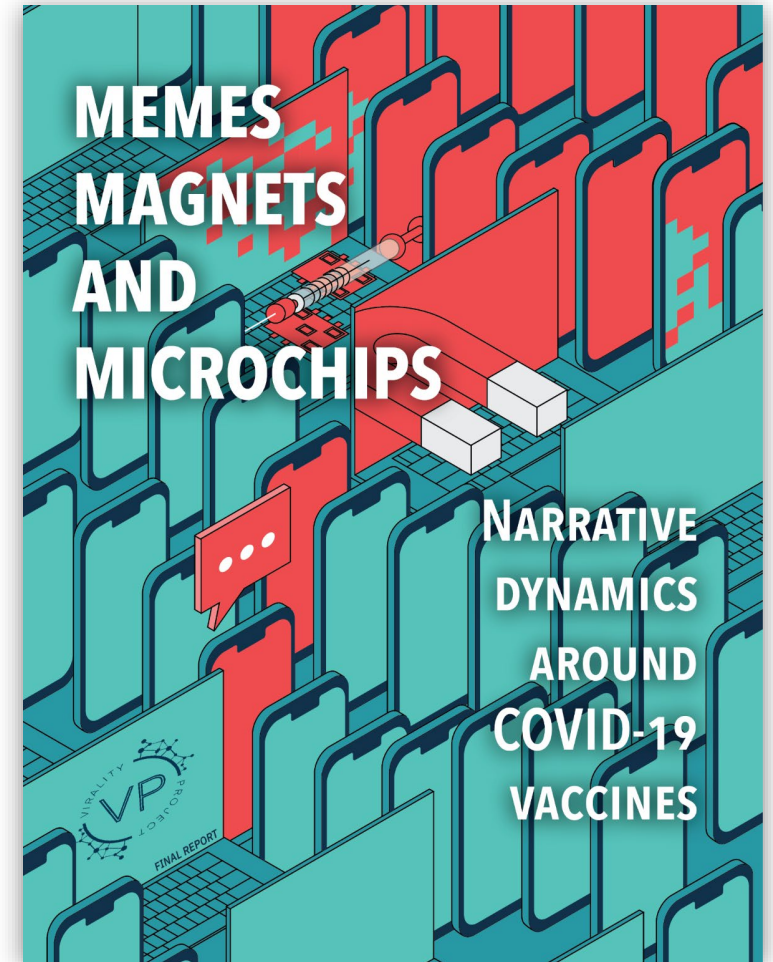
The Virality Project

COVID vaccine dynamics

- Narratives
- Actors and Tactics
- Platform Policies

Potential future impacts

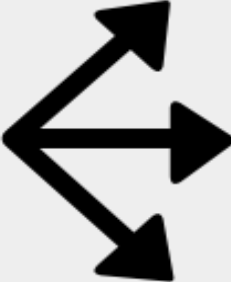
- Recommendations



COVID vaccine hesitancy narratives fell into 4 well-established categories



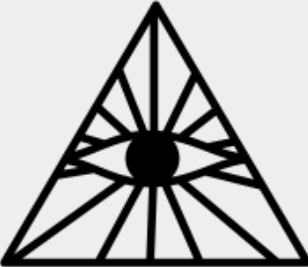
SAFETY



DISTRIBUTION



EFFICACY




CONSPIRACY



SAFETY Narratives: The vaccine is dangerous

- First person videos of adverse reactions
- The vaccine causes death, paralysis, heart attack, stroke, or other significant side effects
- The vaccine alters your DNA
- The vaccine contains toxic substances like graphene oxide, or tromethamine
- The vaccine hasn't been properly tested
- The VAERS database shows evidence of significant side effects

Alex Berenson 
@AlexBerenson

THREAD

19-year-old [redacted] was excited to get her second dose of @moderna_tx's #Covid vaccine on May 1.

Now her mother [redacted] is arranging her funeral.

Photo courtesy of Simone Scott's Instagram

Jacob Fulton and Yunkyo Kim
June 12, 2021

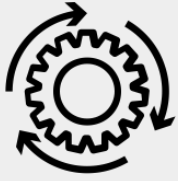
Medill freshman [redacted] died Friday morning following a heart transplant, Vice President for Student Affairs Julie Payne-Kirchmeier announced Saturday in a message to the community.

Remembering student [redacted]
Double major in broadcast journalism and political science/pre-law, she built strong bonds during her first year at Northwestern

June 12, 2021

5:02 AM · Jun 14, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

5,519 Retweets 1,360 Quote Tweets 7,296 Likes



EFFICACY Narratives: The vaccine doesn't work

- Natural immunity is better than vaccine immunity
- If it worked, why do we need boosters?
- Places with high vaccination rates still have outbreaks
- Breakthrough cases prove the vaccine doesn't work



西行小宝



10/4 Project Veritas 第四炮：三位Pfizer科学家曝光自然免疫比疫苗免疫更长久；Pfizer开发和强制疫苗是钱的作用，去年Pfizer揽进150亿美元；目前已经把3000人注射疫苗并引发心脏病的样品送进实验室检测；Pfizer内部严控谈及敏感话题，员工感到被监视；【西行小宝】西行小宝报道

<https://youtu.be/On5RYFbcxWY>

YouTube

Pfizer Scientists: 'Your [COVID] Antibodies Are Better Than The [Pfizer] Vaccination.' #ExposePfizer

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t.me/ruldophwest17/5951

4.3K 👁 edited Oct 5 at 00:46



DISTRIBUTION Narratives: Why the vaccine exists

- Vaccines were developed purely for profit
- Vaccine mandates violate our medical freedom
- Vaccine passports compromise our privacy
- Mandates violate the Nuremberg Code

 **Dr. Joseph Mercola**
@mercola

Knock knock





Conspiracy Narratives: *Something else* is going on

- The vaccine represents the “mark of the beast”
- The vaccine is a bioweapon
- Bill Gates unleashed the virus to create the vaccine
- The vaccines contain microchips
- Vaccination sites are magnetic



From Lol to Legislature: The Magnet Challenge

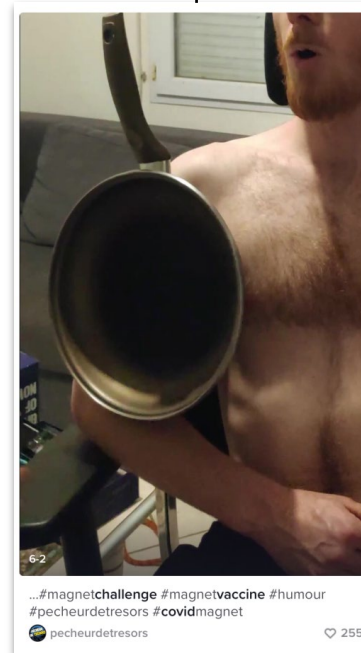
May 9
Viral "Magnet Challenge"
TikTok video



May 20
Amplification by the
Highwire, Del Bigtree



Throughout May
Satirical copycats



June 8
Sherri Tenpenny before
the Ohio Legislature



Familiar Characters + New Additions

Longstanding Anti-vaccine Influencers

the Defender™

CHILDREN'S HEALTH DEFENSE NEWS & VIEWS

UPDATED 05/20/21 • BIG PHARMA • VIEWS

POST A COMMENT: CHD Calls on FDA to Immediately Take COVID Vaccines Off the Market

Children's Health Defense and Millions Against Medical Mandates invite parents, healthcare practitioners, military members and others to comment on their petition calling on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to immediately remove COVID vaccines from the market.

Wellness & Lifestyle Influencers



Pseudomedical Influencers

 **Dr. Joseph Mercola**
May 25, 2021 · 🌐

This is good news for everyone except the vaccine manufacturers and health authorities who have said otherwise.



MEDICINE.WUSTL.EDU
Good news: Mild COVID-19 induces lasting antibody protection | Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis

A Cast of Recurring Characters

Conspiracy Theory Influencers

PREMEDITATED MASS MURDER - Dr. Michael Yeadon - Former Pfizer CEO

NewsParadigm · Published January 7, 2022 · 29,877 Views

SUBSCRIBE 5.7K

SHARE



Stiftung Corona Ausschuss

OVALmedia

Premeditated Mass Murder

Dr. Michael Yeadon

Right-leaning Political Influencers



FOX NEWS

5:08 PT

TUCKER CARLSON TONIGHT

VAX OR LEAVE






















THERE IS NO SCIENTIFIC BASIS FOR THIS

Medical Freedom Influencers

freedom keepers

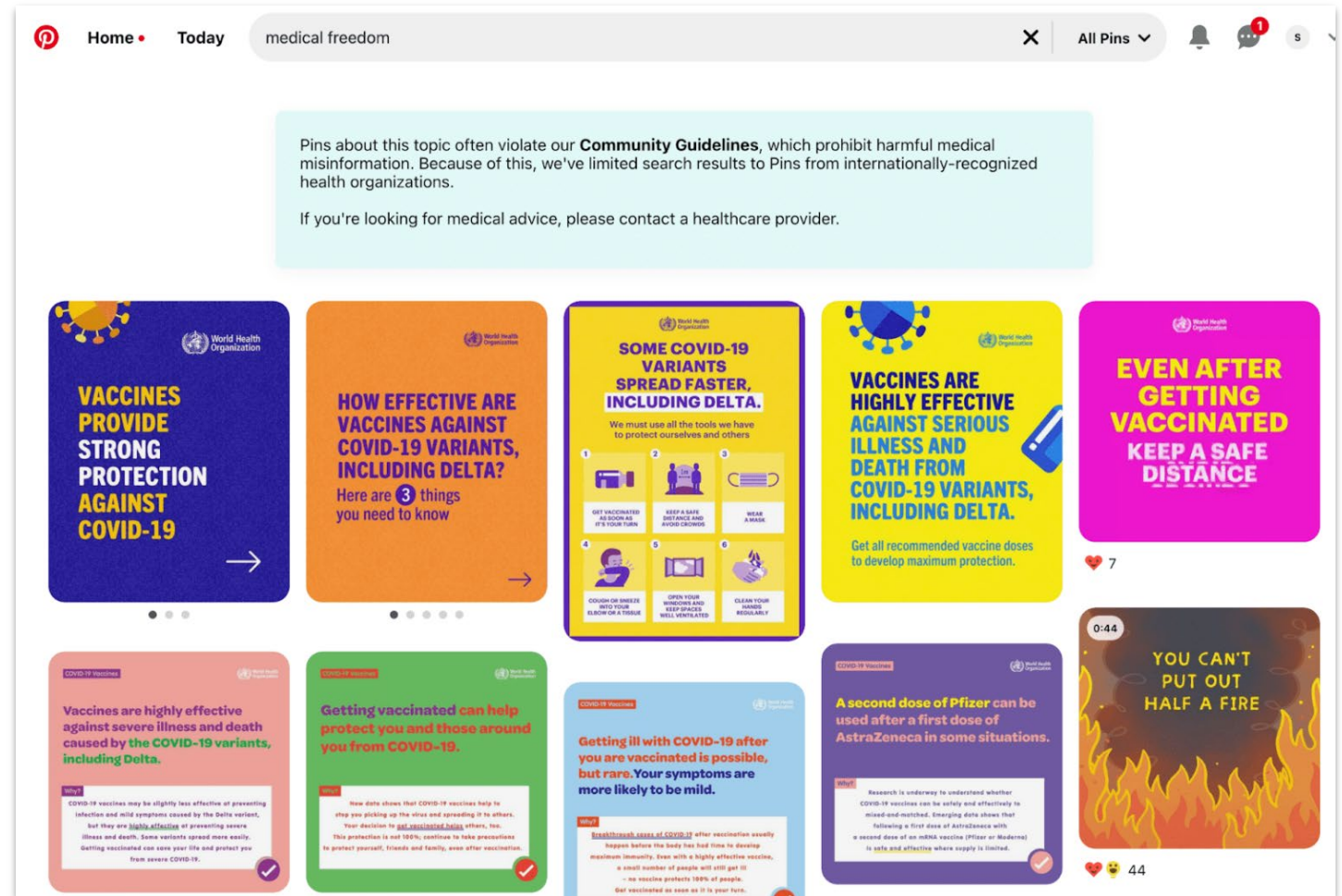
- freedom_._keepers
- nh_freedomkeepers
Freedom Keepers United
- ma_freedomkeepers
MA Freedom Keepers
- tx_freedom_keepers
Texas Freedom Keepers
- oregon_freedom_keepers
OR Freedom Keepers Official
- tn_freedom_keepers
Tennessee Freedom Keepers
- al_freedom_keepers
Alabama Freedom Keepers

Platform Policy Evaluation

“Remove” Policies	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	TikTok	Pinterest	Nextdoor	Reddit
Removes content that could lead to physical harm							
Removes content that runs counter to public health expert consensus							
Clear strike policy for removing recurring actors							

Policy Nuances

- Maintaining a distinction between factually-inaccurate misinformation and personal stories (or “medical freedom” arguments) is challenging; need to avoid overbroad moderation, censorship
- Elevating authoritative sources is a challenge in times of incomplete consensus.



Rumors that fuel vaccine hesitancy remain a challenge


UNSAFE

 **Morgana** 🌸 @Morcia · Jun 4

Still wanting to vaccinate your children? Seven teenagers developed heart inflammation after second dose of COVID vaccine | Daily Mail Online



Seven teenagers developed heart inflammation after second COVID do...
Seven boys ages 14 to 19 in several different states reported having a heart inflammation after the second COVID vaccine, but were able to ...
[dailymail.co.uk](https://www.dailymail.co.uk)

58 749 800


UNNECESSARY

 **rooted.wings** · Follow

UNDER 4 MONTHS of any latency data on safety & efficacy:
<https://www.cnbc.com/amp/2021/01/22/pfizer-says-its-covid-vaccine-trial-for-kids-ages-12-to-15-is-fully-enrolled.html>

🚫 "to each their own" doesn't excuse the radical recklessness of authorizing a statistically unaffected demographic (using our best current data) to be lab rats in a massive experiment.

🔥 99.998%. Where's the justifiable emergency?

🗨️ DO NOT STAY SILENT to be "polite". SPEAK. Demand answers. State facts. We win back this cultural crisis by taking back control of the conversation and refusing to bow quietly to slight-of-hand games as our kids hang in the experimental balance.

1,616 likes
23 HOURS AGO

Rooted Wings
Telegram • Gab • Insta

Visit the COVID-19 Information Center for vaccine resources.

Add a comment... Post

How can
THE MEDICAL COMMUNITY
help?

Enabling responders to act: #ThisIsOurShot



Detection and monitoring

The Virality Project logo features a stylized network of nodes and lines with the letters 'VP' in the center. Below it is the CDC logo, which consists of the letters 'CDC' in white on a blue background with diagonal lines.

**Counter-messaging:
Preemptive + Reactive**

A purple circular logo with a white border containing the text '#THIS IS OUR SHOT' in white, bold, sans-serif font.

**Hero Recruitment
+ Training**

A purple circular logo with a white border containing the text '#THIS IS OUR SHOT' in white, bold, sans-serif font.

**Digitally
Activated Heroes**

An illustration of four healthcare workers (two men and two women) wearing white lab coats, blue masks, and red capes, standing in a row against a light blue background.

Source: #ThisIsOurShot

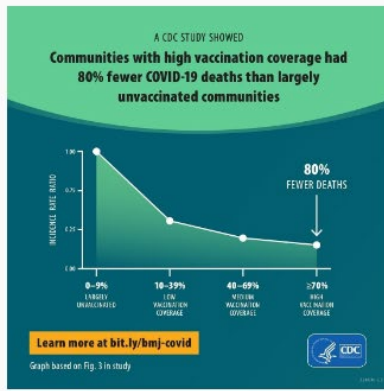


#LaScienceAboard

Même si "l'immunité naturelle" donnait une meilleure protection que les vaccins, ce qui n'est pas le cas!

Le risque de décéder de la COVID-19 est encore plus élevé.

Ne joue pas avec ta santé.



Boosters for kids are approved!

If your child is held back By a fear of shots, I can help to get them on track!

July 8, 2022 · 3:50 PM EDT
Updated 3 days ago

Future of Health

J.S. FDA grants full approval to Pfizer COVID vaccine for ages 12-15



THE CONVERSATION ABOUT THE COVID VACCINES

"The COVID vaccine is safe and effective for kids and adults."

-Dr. Edith Bracho-Sanchez, Pediatrician

American Academy of Pediatrics | WEO COVID

Pixie Panel

83% Vaccinated (at least one dose)

258M Vaccinated (at least one dose)

106k Average daily cases

Community Levels

Low	76%
Medium	15%
High	9%



You don't have to wonder.

Be sure. GET TESTED FOR COVID-19.

ncdhhs.gov/GetTested

THE GOVERNMENT OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



There are other mask options these are just a few examples

Current vaccines work for DELTA Variant

Just when we think we caught a break from COVID

COVID variants:

THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN US ABOUT US

Why not wait for the next round of COVID-19 vaccines?



Dr. Tom Frieden @DrTomFrieden

Mandate or not, masks remain an important tool to help reduce the spread of Covid. When Covid transmission is high, more mask wearing can help bring it down and can protect the most vulnerable.

CONFRONTING HEALTH MISINFORMATION

*The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on
Building a Healthy Information Environment*

2021

I am urging all Americans to help slow the spread of health misinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. Health misinformation is a serious threat to public health. It can cause confusion, sow mistrust, harm people's health, and undermine public health efforts. Limiting the spread of health misinformation is a moral and civic imperative that will require a whole-of-society effort.



Vivek H. Murthy, M.D., M.B.A.
Vice Admiral, U.S. Public Health Service
Surgeon General of the United States



The Anti-Vaccine Movement's New Frontier

A wave of parents has been radicalized by Covid-era misinformation to reject ordinary childhood immunizations — with potentially lethal consequences.

**ESTABLISHED ANTI-VACCINE NETWORKS
AND BLENDED POLITICAL ADVOCACY
EFFORTS ARE TURNING THEIR FOCUS TO
ROUTINE CHILDHOOD VACCINES.**