

Community Issues Programming for January 1 - March 31, 2022

WCLH has identified the following issues as significant issues facing our community this quarter. Following each issue is a list of programs aired addressing that issue.

Issue: COVID-19 Virus: Our community is concerned about the spread of COVID-19 disease as well as the economic impact of "Stay at Home" and other mitigation policies.

Democracy Now! "'A Vaccine for the World": U.S. Scientists Develop Low-Cost Shot to Inoculate Global South". As COVID cases skyrocket, we speak to Dr. Peter Hotez at Texas Children's Hospital about the Omicron surge, as well as his groundbreaking work developing an affordable patent-free coronavirus vaccine. Last week the Indian government gave emergency approval to the new low-cost, patent-free vaccine called Corbevax, which Hotez co-created. He says it could reach billions of people across the globe who have lacked access to the more expensive mRNA vaccines produced by Pfizer and Moderna. "We can really make a vaccine for the world," says Hotez. Hotez also addresses problems stemming from ongoing vaccine hesitancy.
Airdate 3 January 2022 8:14 AM Length 23 minutes.

Democracy Now! "'Public Citizen Blasts Pfizer for Putting Corporate Profit Over Increasing Access to COVID Vaccines" A damning new report shows that one of the leading COVID-19 vaccine makers appears to have played a role in restricting access to those very vaccines. The report, "Pfizer's Power," published this week by the consumer advocacy group Public Citizen, examines Pfizer's contracts with the United States, United Kingdom, European Commission, Albania, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Dominican Republic and Peru. They offer a rare glimpse into the power Pfizer has to silence governments, throttle supply, shift risk and maximize profits in the middle of a public health crisis. We speak with Public Citizen researcher Zain Rizvi, author of the new report.
Airdate 22 October 2021 8:53 AM Length 6 minutes.

Democracy Now! "Meet the Scientist Who Built a Cheap Rapid Test in March 2020. The FDA Never Approved It". The United States faces a shortage of rapid COVID-19 tests amid the Omicron surge even as many inexpensive at-home rapid testing models have been ready for distribution — but refused approval by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. One scientist, Harvard-trained Irene Bosch, submitted a rapid test to the FDA for emergency approval in March 2020 and even had a factory ready to produce it. Bosch describes how the FDA's rejection came from unclear standards set by the administration early on in the pandemic, and says earlier approval of testing like hers could have saved lives.
Airdate 3 January 2022 8:37 AM Length 13 minutes.

Democracy Now! "WHO Says Omicron Variant Is Not 'Mild' We look at the skyrocketing number of COVID infections. Coronavirus cases hit record highs this week, with global cases climbing 70% from last week to 9.5 million and the U.S. reporting a single-day record of 1 million new cases on Monday. In the U.S., the extraordinary volume of cases is filling up emergency rooms nationwide and exhausting healthcare workers, says emergency room physician Dr. Craig Spencer, who has been treating coronavirus patients since the pandemic began. "We're much better at treating this disease now," says Spencer, "but the problem is that the amount of volume that we're seeing threatens to really wash away any added benefit from either a milder variant or even all that experience that we've learned and those tools that we've built up over the past few years." Spencer also critiques the U.S. government's role in prolonging the pandemic, saying, "Global vaccine inequity has been one of the most profound and disappointing aspects of this pandemic over the past year."

Airdate 7 January 8:30 AM Length 19 minutes.

Democracy Now! "Breaking Point: Ed Yong Says Omicron Is Straining Hospitals & Schools Amid Vaccine Mandate Pushback": The Omicron variant's transmission rate is exponentially higher than Delta, leaving healthcare workers across the U.S. in dire straits. Waves of doctors, nurses and other health professionals are unionizing, and some have quit the profession over exploitative conditions. The staffing shortage has added on to the strains of increasing hospitalizations due to COVID-19, limited availability of necessary equipment and lack of federal support for preventative measures such as paid medical leave. "This is the cost of two years spent pushing prematurely for a return to normal," says Ed Yong, Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter and science writer at The Atlantic. Yong also discusses the debate over keeping schools open during the COVID-19 surge, and challenges to President Biden's vaccine mandates affecting nearly 100 million workers.

Airdate 10 January 2022 8:46 AM Length 13 minutes.

Democracy Now! "Back to Normal? Many Immunocompromised People Feel Left Behind as U.S. Lifts Pandemic Measures": As U.S. health guidelines start to loosen as COVID-19 cases fall from record-high levels of infection, we look at how there are still millions of immunocompromised people who face acute risk of illness and feel they have received little to no guidance on how to stay safe in a prolonged COVID-19 world. Pulitzer Prize-winning science writer Ed Yong of The Atlantic spoke to immunocompromised people for his new report and says, "While a lot of the world opens up, their world shuts down, and they feel left behind and abandoned by the government, by their friends, by their workplaces." Yong notes immunocompromised people "want their lives back, too," but are just asking for structural solutions to help keep them and non-immunocompromised people safe.

Airdate 17 February 2022 8:36 AM Length 12 minutes.

Democracy Now! "Calls Grow for Medicare for All; Uninsured & Communities of Color Hurt Most by End of COVID-19 Funds" With COVID-19 coverage ending for the uninsured, we look at how uninsured people and communities of color will bear the impact of the end to free COVID-19 testing, treatment and vaccines, and how the pandemic has led to a renewed push for Medicare for All. We are joined by Dr. Oni Blackstock, primary care and HIV physician and founder and executive director of Health Justice, and Dr. Adam Gaffney, critical care physician, professor at Harvard Medical School and immediate past president of Physicians for a National Health Program.

Airdate 31 March 2022 8:42 AM Length 17 minutes.

Issue: Gun Control: Recent mass shootings have some calling for stricter gun control.

Democracy Now! "'45K People Died from Gun Violence on Your Watch': Parkland Survivors Demand More Action from Biden" Survivors and families of the victims of the 2018 mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High in Parkland, Florida, have launched a new online tool called the "Shock Market" to track the occurrence of U.S. gun violence. This comes as Manuel Oliver, the father of 17-year-old victim Joaquin "Guac" Oliver, was arrested during a peaceful protest demanding the Biden administration take action to curb gun violence. "Very little has changed since the last four years," says Oliver. We also speak with David Hogg, survivor of the Parkland school massacre and a founder and board member of March for Our Lives. Hogg says President Biden is failing on gun policy and risks losing the Senate for another decade if inaction persists.

Airdate 16 February 2022 8:34 AM Length 16 minutes.