

Community Issues Programming for January 1 - March 31, 2021

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! "Dr. Ali Khan: U.S. Needs to Quickly Ramp Up Vaccinations as COVID Kills Over 4,000 in Single Day". As the United States breaks all records for coronavirus cases, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warns another 92,000 could die in the next three weeks as complaints grow over the slow distribution of COVID vaccines. Across the country, hospitals are overflowing, and ICU beds are in short supply. In Los Angeles County, an epicenter of the outbreak, a staggering one in three residents has gotten the coronavirus since the start of the pandemic, according to new data. For more on the pandemic, we speak with epidemiologist Dr. Ali Khan, dean of the University of Nebraska Medical Center's College of Public Health and the former director of the CDC's Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response, where he oversaw the Strategic National Stockpile. He says that despite the grim statistics in the United States, other countries with more proactive pandemic responses have shown that it is possible to bring the virus under control and largely return to normal life. "We can do that same thing here in the United States if we use good science," he says.
Airdate 14 January 2021 8:50 AM Length 9 minutes.

Democracy Now! "Would You Patent the Sun? Polio Vaccine Inventor Jonas Salk's Son Urges More Access to COVID Vaccine" The total number of deaths from COVID-19 in the U.S. is set to top 400,000 before Joe Biden's inauguration on January 20, but rollout of coronavirus vaccines has been slow, with many describing a vexing amount of red tape standing between them and the shot. We look at the development and distribution of another vaccine during the polio epidemic in the 1950s with Dr. Peter Salk, a physician and professor of infectious diseases and microbiology at the University of Pittsburgh, whose father, Dr. Jonas Salk, developed the first polio vaccine and famously declined to patent his invention. "The rest of the world and the countries that are less able to afford vaccines need consideration, as well," says Dr. Salk. "There needs to be a creative cooperation among all of us, including the businesses, in order to find ways to satisfy the needs of these other countries."
Airdate 15 January 2021 8:41 AM Length 18 minutes.

Democracy Now! "As Death Toll Tops 410,000, Biden Pushes "Wartime Effort" to Fight COVID. But Could More Be Done?". On his first full day in office, President Joe Biden unveiled a 198-page national plan to tackle the coronavirus pandemic as the U.S. death toll tops 410,000. He signed 10 executive orders to create a new national COVID-19 testing board, to help schools reopen, to mandate international travelers to quarantine upon arrival, and to require masks on many forms of interstate transportation. Biden also invoked the Defense Production Act to increase COVID-19 testing and the production of vaccine supplies, saying a wartime effort is needed to combat the virus. "It just feels like the federal government is back, the federal government is going to play a constructive and helpful role in this pandemic and the pandemic response. And that's critical," says Dr. Ashish Jha, dean of the Brown University School of Public Health. "It's science-driven stuff that I wish we had had a year ago." Dr. Jha also discusses his proposal to delay giving out second shots of coronavirus vaccines until there is more supply, as well as how new variants of the coronavirus impact the efficacy of existing vaccines.

Airdate 22 January 2021 8:14 AM Length 19 minutes.

Democracy Now! "MIA: Where Have All the Vaccines Gone? CDC Says Only Half of Shots Feds Sent to States Were Used". January has become the deadliest month of the pandemic in the United States, with at least 80,000 deaths from COVID-19 so far, and public health experts worry new, more contagious variants of the coronavirus could make things worse. President Joe Biden has announced plans to acquire another 200 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines, aiming to vaccinate most people in the U.S. by summer, but vaccine distribution continues to be a problem. The Daily Beast reports that of the 41 million vaccine doses handed out to states, fewer than 22 million have been administered. Meanwhile, many states report running out of vaccines. "States are telling federal officials that they believe millions of doses are lost in the distribution system," says reporter Erin Banco. "What the Biden team is trying to do now is sort of do an accounting exercise to figure out where these vaccine doses are located."

Airdate 27 January 2021 8:50 AM Length 9 minutes.

Democracy Now! "Share the Technology: Experts Say We Must End Big Pharma Monopoly on COVID Vaccine Supply & Price": As rich countries race to roll out their vaccination programs, leaders in the Global South and global health advocates are increasingly decrying vaccine hoarding that has pushed poorer countries to the back of the line during the pandemic. Some rich countries have secured enough COVID-19 vaccines to inoculate their populations several times over, while poorer countries struggle to secure enough doses, almost certainly prolonging the pandemic by months or even years. Public health policy expert Dr. Mohga Kamal-Yanni says an obvious way to address the issue is to share technology so more companies in more countries can produce the vaccines. "There is a supply issue," she says. "We're in a pandemic. We need to vaccinate a big percentage of the population globally if we want to be safe."

Airdate 28 January 2021 8:38 AM Length 10 minutes.

Democracy Now! "Dead Before Christmas: As U.S. Passes 250K COVID Deaths, Healthcare Workers Brace for Holiday Surge" As the official U.S. COVID-19 death toll breaks worldwide records and passes 250,000, hospitals are at capacity, and overwhelmed healthcare workers still lack personal protective equipment. Health officials say conditions will worsen further with holiday travel and family gatherings for Thanksgiving. "I can't really overemphasize how important the next few days are," says Ed Yong, science writer at The Atlantic. "The people who get infected at Thanksgiving, they are going to slam into those hospitals in the two weeks after that, and some of those people are going to be dead before Christmas."

Airdate 19 November 2020 8:14 AM Length 26 minutes.

Democracy Now! "Latinx COVID Deaths Soar 1,000% in Los Angeles as Communities of Color Lag Behind in Vaccine Rollout". Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, Black and Latinx people in the United States have died at higher rates, and new data shows that they are getting vaccinated at much lower rates than white people. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports more than 60% of those vaccinated were white, while just 11.5% were Latinx, 6% were Asian, and just over 5% were Black. The CDC data is based on details gathered during the first month of the U.S. vaccination campaign that saw nearly 13 million Americans get a shot, though race and ethnicity was only known for about half of the recipients. Black and Latinx people continue to face a disproportionate risk for COVID-19 in their jobs as essential workers and are more likely to have preexisting conditions. "What we're seeing illustrated is about 150 years of medical neglect," says Dr. David Hayes-Bautista, director of the Center for the Study of Latino Health and Culture at UCLA School of Medicine. "These disparities didn't suddenly appear nine months ago at the beginning of the pandemic. These disparities have been built in, decision by decision."

Airdate 2 February 2021 8:18 AM Length 22 minutes.

Democracy Now! "Lancet Report: 40% of U.S. COVID Deaths Were Preventable. The Country Needs Universal Healthcare Now". As the U.S. death toll from COVID-19 approaches half a million, a new report says nearly 40% of the deaths were avoidable. By comparing the pandemic in the U.S. to other high-income nations, the medical journal The Lancet found significant gaps in former President Donald Trump's "inept and insufficient" response to COVID-19, as well as decades of destructive public policy decisions. One of the report's recommendations is reforming the system to a single-payer model like Medicare for All, which President Joe Biden has so far rejected in favor of bolstering the Affordable Care Act. "The Affordable Care Act still left millions of people — 29 million people — without healthcare insurance coverage," says Dr. Mary Bassett, one of the authors of The Lancet report. "Single payer would address that."

Airdate 15 February 2021 8:44 AM Length 15 minutes.

Democracy Now! "How to Wear a Mask & When to Wear Two to Reduce COVID Transmission & Increase Vaccine Effectiveness". While COVID-19 infection rates and hospitalizations appear to be waning, the United States has a long way to go before people can safely return to everyday life without masks. Dr. Monica Gandhi, an infectious disease physician and professor of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, says it's vital to stay vigilant even as vaccinations ramp up. "If we can get our transmission down as low as possible, that is actually going to make the vaccines more effective."

Airdate 18 February 2021 8:28 AM Length 13 minutes.

Democracy Now! "'Black People Face Higher COVID Infections & Deaths. Should They Have Lower Age Cutoffs for Vaccines?'. As the U.S. vaccine rollout continues to expand, health justice advocates worry about a racial gap in vaccinations. Black communities have been hard hit by the pandemic, but rates of vaccination in communities of color lag behind largely white communities across the country. Dr. Oni Blackstock, a primary care and HIV physician, argues that age cutoffs should be lowered or removed for Black people in order to speed up inoculations, noting that Black Americans are twice as likely to die from COVID-19 as white Americans and also dying at rates similar to those of white Americans who are 10 years older. "These fixed-age cutoffs that most states implemented did not take into account structural racism's toll on Black life expectancy in addition to the impact of the pandemic on the life expectancy of Black people in this country," says Dr. Blackstock.

Airdate 2 March 2021 8:28 AM Length 20 minutes.