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When Profits and Politics Drive Science: The Hazards of Rushing a Vaccine at "Warp Speed"

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More than 100 companies are competing to be first in the race to get a COVID-19 vaccine to market. It's a race against time, not because the death rate is climbing but because it is falling – to the point where there could soon be too few subjects to prove the effectiveness of the drug.

So says **Pascal Soriot,** chief executive of AstraZeneca, a British-Swedish pharmaceutical company that is a frontrunner in the race. Soriot said on May 24th,

> "The vaccine has to work and that's one question, and the other question is, even if it works, we have to be able to demonstrate it. We have to run as fast as possible before the disease disappears so we can demonstrate that the vaccine is effective."

If the disease is disappearing of its own accord, why throw billions of dollars at developing a vaccine? The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has already agreed to provide up to $1.2 billion to AstraZeneca and another $483 million to US frontrunner Moderna to develop their experimental candidates. "As American taxpayers, we are justified in asking why," writes William Haseltine in Forbes.

Both companies have attracted billions from private investors and don't need taxpayer money, and the government's speculative bets are being made on unproven technologies in the early stages of testing. The profits will go to the companies and their shareholders, while the liabilities will be borne by the public. Vaccine manufacturers are protected from liability for vaccine injuries by the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program and the 2005 PREP Act, which impose damages instead on the US government and US taxpayers.

Long-term systemic effects including cancer, Alzheimer's disease, autoimmune disease, and infertility can take decades to develop. But the stage is already being set for mandatory vaccinations that will be "deployed" by the US military as soon as the end of the year. The HHS in conjunction with the Department of Defense has awarded a $138 million contract for 600 million syringes prefilled with coronavirus vaccine, individually marked with trackable RFID chips. That's enough for two doses for nearly the entire US population.

COVID-19, like other coronaviruses, is expected to mutate at least every season, raising serious questions about claims that any vaccine will work. A successful vaccine has never been developed for any of the many strains of coronaviruses despite 30 years of effort, due to the nature of the virus itself. In fact vaccinated people can have a higher chance of serious illness and death when later exposed to another strain of the virus, a phenomenon

known as "virus interference." An earlier SARS vaccine touted as effective because it produced antibodies to the virus never made it to market because the laboratory animals contracted more serious symptoms on re-infection, and most of them died. In reports from China and South Korea, even people who have previously recovered from COVID-19 have become re-infected with the virus. If antibodies created naturally in response to the wild virus don't protect against future infections, the weaker vaccine-triggered antibodies won't work either.

Researchers working with the AstraZeneca vaccine claimed success in preliminary studies because its lab monkeys all survived and formed antibodies to COVID-19, but data reported later showed that the animals all became infected when challenged, raising serious doubts about the vaccine's effectiveness. But these concerns have not deterred the HHS, which is proceeding at "Warp Speed" to get the new technologies on the market.

Fast-tracking Moderna's mRNA Vaccine

Biotech company Moderna, the US frontrunner, has been allowed to skip animal trials altogether before rushing to human trials. It has gotten fast-track approval from the FDA for its "messenger RNA" vaccine, an innovation that has never been approved for marketing or proven in a large-scale clinical trial. The major advantage of mRNA vaccines is the speed with which they can be deployed. Created in a lab rather than from a real virus, they can be mass-produced cost-effectively on a large scale and do not require uninterrupted cold storage. But this speed comes at the risk of major side effects.

In a 2017 TED talk called "Rewriting the Genetic Code," Moderna's current chief medical officer **Dr. Tal Zaks** said, "We're actually hacking the software of life …." As explained by a medical doctor writing in *The UK Independent* on May 20th:

> Moderna's messenger RNA vaccine … uses a sequence of genetic RNA material produced in a lab that, when injected into your body, must invade your cells and hijack your cells' protein-making machinery called ribosomes to produce the viral components that subsequently train your immune system to fight the virus. …
>
> In many ways, the vaccine almost behaves like an RNA virus itself except that it hijacks your cells to produce the parts of the virus, like the spike protein, rather than the whole virus. Some messenger RNA vaccines are even self-amplifying…. There are unique and unknown risks to messenger RNA vaccines, including the possibility that they generate strong type I interferon responses that could lead to inflammation and autoimmune conditions.

As noted in Science Magazine, RNA that invades from outside the cell is the hallmark of a virus, and our immune systems have evolved ways to recognize and destroy it. To avoid that, Moderna's mRNA vaccine sneaks into cells encapsulated in nanoparticles, which aren't easily degraded and can cause toxic buildup in the liver. A lab-created self-amplifying virus that evades the cell's defenses by stealth sounds inherently risky. In fact "stealth viruses" are classified as "bioweapons."

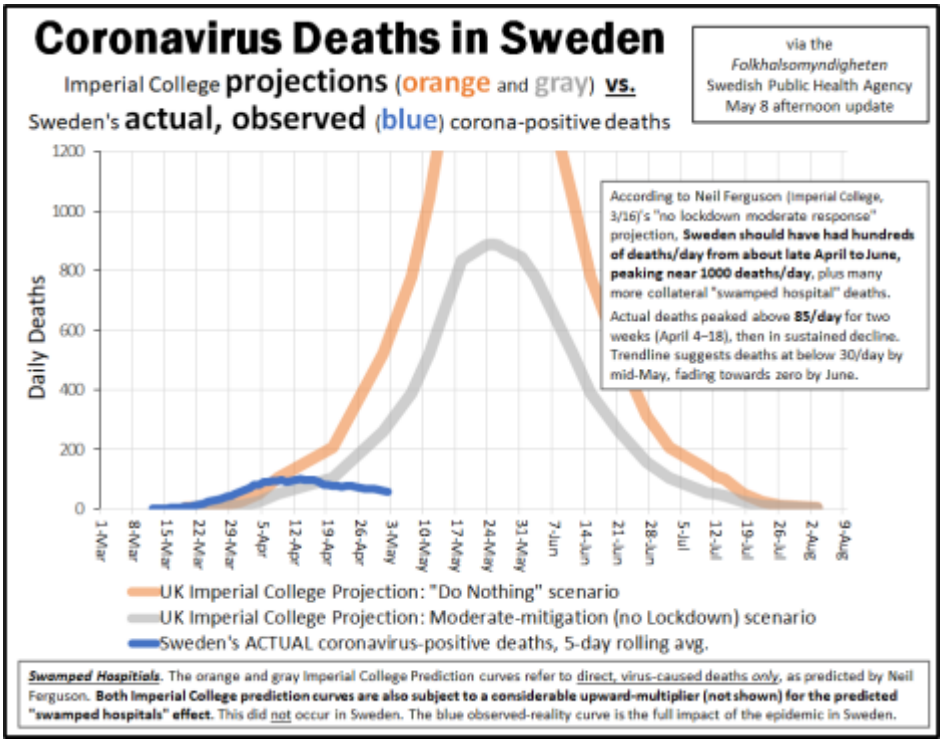
While long-proven, cheap coronavirus treatments with decades of safety testing are being described as dangerous and unproven for treating COVID-19, no one seems to be looking at the risks of the novel vaccines being rushed to market as the only viable alternative for

getting the economy back to work.

Why the Need for Haste?

The argument originally advanced for fast-tracking a COVID-19 vaccine was that the magnitude of the pandemic required shutting down the whole economy until a vaccine was found. But earlier dire projections have now been heavily revised downward. The 3.4% coronavirus mortality rate put forward by the World Health Organization and the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) at the start of the pandemic was downgraded by the CDC in May to between 0.2% and 0.3%, less than one-tenth the original estimates. The computer-modeled projection of 2.2 million US deaths issued by Imperial College London in March, which triggered shutdowns across the United States, has also been found to be "wildly" overblown. In fact researchers writing in the UK Telegraph on May 16th called it "the most devastating software mistake of all time." They wrote that "we would fire anyone for developing code like this" and that the question was "why our Government did not get a second opinion before swallowing Imperial's prescription."

Here is a chart of the actual death rate from COVID-19 in Sweden, which did not lock down its economy, versus the rate projected by the Imperial College model without lockdown:



Sweden has actually fared better than many industrialized countries that did lock down their economies. As of June 5th, Belgium, the UK, Spain and Italy, which all locked down, had more deaths per million than Sweden; while France, the Netherlands, Ireland, the US, Switzerland and Canada all had fewer. Sweden was in the median range. Other researchers have found no correlation between lockdowns and COVID-19 deaths.

In other news from the CDC, on May 23rd the agency reported that the antibody tests used to determine whether people have developed an immunity to the virus are too unreliable to be used.

But none of this seems to be dimming the hype and the deluge of investment money being thrown at the latest experimental vaccines. And perhaps that is the point of the exercise – to extract as much money as possible from gullible investors, including the US government, before the public discovers that the fundamentals of these stocks do not support the hype. If we need seven billion doses of the vaccine before life can return to normal**,** as Bill Gates contends, the profit bonanza is enormous; and there is no need for vaccine manufacturers to proceed with caution, since the government will pick up the tab for vaccine injuries.

Moderna: A Multibillion-Dollar "Unicorn" That Has Never Brought a Product to Market

Moderna in particular has been suspected of pumping its stock price with unreliable preliminary test data. On May 18th its stock jumped by as much as 30%, after it issued a press release announcing positive results from a small preliminary trial of its coronavirus vaccine. After the market closed, the company announced a stock offering aimed at raising $1 billion; and on May 18th and 19th, Moderna executives dumped nearly $30 million worth of stock for a profit of $25 million.

On May 19th, however, the stock rocketed back down, after STAT News questioned the company's test results. An antibody response was reported for only eight of the 45 patients, not enough for statistical analysis. Was the response significant enough to create immunity? And what about the other 37 patients?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. called the results a "catastrophe" for the company. He wrote on May 20th:

> Three of the 15 human guinea pigs in the high dose cohort (250 mcg) suffered a "serious adverse event" within 43 days of receiving Moderna's jab. Moderna … acknowledged that three volunteers developed Grade 3 systemic events, defined by the FDA as "Preventing daily activity and requiring medical intervention."
>
> Moderna allowed only exceptionally healthy volunteers to participate in the study. A vaccine with those reaction rates could cause grave injuries in 1.5 billion humans if administered to "every person on earth".

A volunteer named Ian Haydon buoyed the markets when he appeared on CNBC to say he felt fine after getting the vaccine. But he later revealed that after the second jab, he got chills and a fever of over 103°, lost consciousness, and "felt more sick than he ever has before." And those were just the short-term adverse effects. The long-term degenerative effects won't be known for years.

By May 22nd, Moderna's stock was down by 26% from its earlier high, making its 30% rise on a misleading press release look like a "pump and dump" scheme. On CNBC on May 19th, Jacob Frankel, a former Securities Exchange Commission lawyer, said Moderna's stock offering on the heels of hyped news was the type of action that would draw scrutiny by the SEC, and that it could have a criminal component.

Dual Use? Another Look at Moderna's mRNA Vaccine

Moderna's stock has more than tripled this year, taking it to a market cap of over $22 billion. STAT News called it "an astonishing feat for a company that currently sells zero products." Many of the companies actively developing COVID-19 vaccines have longer and more impressive track records. Why the keen interest in this "unicorn" startup that went public only in 2018 and has no record of market success?

Moderna's stock first shot up after the World Health Organization announced on February 24th that the world needed to prepare for a global pandemic, collapsing stock markets everywhere. In a well-timed press release the next day, Moderna announced that testing of its vaccine on humans would begin in March, rocketing its stock price up by nearly 30%. Mega-investors made tens of millions of dollars in a single day, including BlackRock, the world's largest asset manager, which made *$68 million* just on February 25th. BlackRock was called "the fourth branch of government" after it was tasked in March with dispensing up to $4.5 trillion in Federal Reserve credit through "special purpose vehicles" established by the Treasury and the Fed.

Moderna has other friends in high places, including the Pentagon. Several years ago, Moderna received millions of dollars from the Pentagon's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), as well as from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Perhaps the fact that Moderna's mRNA vaccine is a "stealth virus" riding in on nanoparticles to evade the cell's defenses explains DARPA's interest in the technology. DARPA was behind the creation of both DNA and RNA vaccines, funding their early research and development by Moderna and by Inovio Pharmaceuticals Inc.

In a 2010 document titled "Biotechnology: Genetically Engineered Pathogens," the US Air Force acknowledged that it was studying "genetically engineered pathogens that could pose serious threats to society," including "binary biological weapons, designer genes, gene therapy as a weapon, stealth viruses, host-swapping diseases, and designer diseases." In December 2017, over 1,200 emails released under open records requests revealed that the US military is now the top funder behind the controversial "genetic extinction" technology known as "gene drives." As investigative reporter Whitney Webb observed in a May 4th article, "these genetic 'kill switches' could also be inserted into actual humans through artificial chromosomes, which – just as they have the potential to extend life – also have the potential to cut it short."

Biowarfare is forbidden under international treaty, but the army's Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases at Fort Detrick says its investigations are to "protect the warfighter from biological threats" and to protect civilians from threats to public health. Even assuming that is true, are the army's technicians proficient enough to tinker with the genetic code without hitting a kill switch or two by mistake?

The military is thinking about war, the pharmaceutical companies and investors are thinking about profits, the politicians are thinking about getting a vaccine to market so the country can return to work, and even the regulators are bypassing proper safety tests in the rush to get the entire global population vaccinated. That means it's up to us, the recipients of these novel untested GMO vaccines, to demand some serious vetting before the military shows up at our doors with their prefilled RFID-chipped syringes some time later this year.

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