



THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF  
IMMUNOLOGISTS

**Statement of The American Association of Immunologists (AAI)\***

**October 14, 2020**

The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the gravest public health threats in our lifetime and scientists have risen to the challenge. Immunologists are working around the clock to develop lifesaving treatments and vaccines to combat this disease. The rapid progress that has been made toward achieving these goals is remarkable, but significant scientific and clinical hurdles remain. For scientific advances to benefit the public, scientific and public health experts need the support of the U.S. government and the trust of the American people as we confront the many challenges posed by this virus. It is therefore deeply troubling to see reports of significant and increasing political interference by the Administration in efforts by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to keep the public safe. Some CDC attempts to provide evolving information, including about the importance of social distancing and mask wearing, and about the airborne transmissibility of the virus, have reportedly been delayed, altered, or stopped. Recent FDA promises to ensure stringent safety and efficacy standards for drug and vaccine approval have reportedly been met with resistance. If we are to defeat COVID-19 or any future pandemic, it is critically important that our government leaders “follow the science.” This requires listening to scientists who are experts in the applicable field and whose recommendations are supported by independent peers, not to scientists/physicians or other individuals who do not have training in the relevant areas. We are very concerned that leading infectious disease, immunology, virology, and public health experts appear to have a diminished role at this critical time in the pandemic. We urge the Administration and Congress to consult them and the excellent scientists at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and other relevant federal agencies on all decisions related to the science of the pandemic.

While we are optimistic that there will be many new treatments, and eventually, one or more vaccines that will end this long national and international nightmare, we oppose any actions, including political pressure, that would lead to the premature approval of any drug or vaccine candidate. Public confidence in the safety and efficacy of vaccines and therapeutics is as important as their discovery. Actions that are not founded in science to alter scientifically determined timelines or processes will undermine this confidence, increase vaccine hesitancy or refusal, and prolong – or worsen – the pandemic. AAI members will continue to do our part, following the scientific data and doing our very best to save lives. Our success, however, is very much dependent on the support and wisdom of our government leaders.

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\*AAI ([www.aai.org](http://www.aai.org)) is the nation's largest professional association of research scientists and physicians who study the immune system.