

## Border Crisis: New Mexico Health Crisis

March 9, 2019 Border Security Meeting and Town Hall, Deming, NM

By Janice E. Arnold-Jones

At the Border Security Meeting in Deming, NM this past Saturday, March 9, 2019, there was a LOT of good information but the most compelling, for me, and of the greatest concern came from Richard Wooten, Respiratory Therapist and Gary Thrasher, DVM.

Based on their data, we are one of the most vaccinated nations in the world and thus are free from human cases of TB, Measles, Mumps and, in animals, Equine Encephalitis, Brucellosis, etc.

When people enter the USA through legal channels, part of the entry requirement is a health check and immunization against disease. With the uptick of migrants entering the USA as asylum seekers, there are some medical assessments, but no immunization is taking place at the border.

A significant number of asylum seekers are carrying diseases that threaten the US “inoculated herd”.

*“Vaccinations are essential to a healthy population because they are predicated on herd immunity – when enough people are vaccinated and immune to a disease, its transmission is reduced or eliminated.” <https://www.abqjournal.com/1290454/flu-measles-on-rise-get-you-your-kids-vaccinated.html>*

The bacteria in TB is spread by coughs and sneezes that may travel as much as 200 feet. Measles, like TB is highly contagious especially four days before and after the rash appears. My children missed mumps because of MMR vaccine, yet there are over 200 recently reported cases of mumps in the asylum seeker community.

As the number of asylum seekers grows, the number of Americans taking care of them are increasingly at risk, simply because of the number of humans compounded by buildings and busses without enough ventilation for the crush of people. Workers experiencing increased risk include: Customs and Border Patrol; housekeeping and maintenance employees, phlebotomists, lab techs, X-Ray techs, nurses, physicians and dieticians to name a few.

Asylum seekers with children are frequently put on a GPS monitor with a promise to return for their “credible threat” hearing. There are few health interventions but the likelihood of them disappearing into our country is high. They will find work in dairies, hotels and restaurants where the spread of TB, measles, lice and scabies is possible.

The State of Washington, with only a 40% vaccination compliance rate, has reported a measles outbreak with 75 documented cases. They have declared a State of Emergency requiring the help of over 600 healthcare workers and current costs in excess of \$1.5 million.

In New Mexico, nearly 5000 out of approximately 320,000 school age students were granted immunization waivers. Add nearly 30,000 asylum seekers, since October 2018, passing into and through New Mexico, is there now a significant health risk?

Lastly, Border Patrol agents and medical professionals, who are the first contact for these large groups of asylum seekers, become vulnerable. Nothing presented during the discussion talked about protecting them. For example, are Border Patrol Stations equipped with showers and

laundry facilities so agents and medical professionals can do the bare minimum to protect their families before they return home?

On March 4, 2019, Mexican officials said they expected 700,000 migrants to pass through Mexico on their way to our Southwestern border. New Mexico will get its share and with that a significant health risk due to microscopic baggage.

Frustration was evident. New Mexicans in the bootheel have been asking for help since at least 2005. What have they received? A hundred times more illegal immigrants passing through their property, some breaking and or stealing equipment, setting signal fires, leaving trash and needles; and sometimes a gun shoved in their face. The Bootheel of NM is in crisis and, sadly, the chairs reserved for our Governor or Congressional delegation (or their representatives) remained empty. It is hard to listen if you aren't there, and if you want to be in charge, you need to show up.

Yes, it is a crisis, and the health crisis may be the biggest threat of all.

## Tuberculous Rank (TB) by Country per 100,000 Population 2017 1-195

| Country Rank 1-195 | Country        | Number of Cases |
|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1                  | Lesotho        | 665             |
| 40                 | Afghanistan    | 189             |
| 41                 | Haiti          | 181             |
| 57                 | Vietnam        | 129             |
| 60                 | Peru           | 116             |
| 62                 | Bolivia        | 111             |
| 71                 | Guyana         | 86              |
| 78                 | El Salvador    | 72              |
| 88                 | China          | 63              |
| 89                 | Russia         | 60              |
| 93                 | Panama         | 54              |
| 101                | Nicaragua      | 45              |
| 102                | Brazil         | 44              |
| 103                | Paraguay       | 44              |
| 105                | Ecuador        | 43              |
| 106                | Venezuela      | 42              |
| 107                | Iraq           | 42              |
| 111                | Honduras       | 38              |
| 113                | Belize         | 36              |
| 117                | Columbia       | 33              |
| 119                | Uruguay        | 31              |
| 120                | Suriname       | 29              |
| 123                | Argentina      | 26              |
| 125                | Guatemala      | 25              |
| 127                | Mexico         | 22              |
| 136                | Chile          | 17              |
| 138                | Japan          | 15              |
| 142                | Iran           | 14              |
| 151                | Spain          | 10              |
| 154                | Costa Rica     | 9.7             |
| 155                | United Kingdom | 8.9             |
| 156                | France         | 8.0             |
| 159                | Germany        | 7.5             |
| 164                | Cuba           | 7.1             |
| 173                | Canada         | 5.5             |
| 185                | United States  | 3.1             |
| 195                | Barbados       | 0.0             |

Source: <https://knoema.com/atlas/maps/Incidence-of-tuberculosis>

Additional Sources:

[www.abqjournal.com/1290454/flu-measles-on-rise-get-you-your-kids-vaccinated.html](http://www.abqjournal.com/1290454/flu-measles-on-rise-get-you-your-kids-vaccinated.html)

<https://www.cdc.gov/tb/publications/factsheets/statistics/tbtrends.htm>

<https://www.tbfacts.org/countries-tb/>

<https://www.rightdiagnosis.com/t/tuberculosis/stats-country.htm>

<https://universityhealthnews.com/daily/eyes-ears-nose-throat/how-far-does-a-sneeze-travel/>

<https://www.lcsun-news.com/story/news/local/2019/03/06/rise-unvaccinated-children-new-mexico-leader-concerned/3081830002/>

## Editorial: Flu, measles on rise; get you, your kids vaccinated

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BY ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL EDITORIAL BOARD

Monday, March 11th, 2019 at 12:05am

*"We hope families take seriously the threat that flu can have on their health and get their flu vaccination today. It's not too late to protect yourself and your loved ones."*

– Health Secretary Kathy Kunkel

In January, the Journal editorialized that "It's not too late to get that flu shot — for all our sakes."

And since then more than 120 New Mexico babies and toddlers age 4 and under have been hospitalized with influenza. State epidemiologist Dr. Michael Landen says our hospitalization rate for young flu victims is triple the national average. And yet, it's not like there's a shortage of the vaccine – unlike the new shingles vaccine, there are plenty of flu 's shots available. It's not like it's inconvenient to get one – most every doctor's office, grocery and drug store have the shots on hand. It's not like it's expensive – insurance and Medicaid expansion cover the vaccine.

It's not like it's a bad match for the actual flu – this season's vaccine covers both the H1N1 and H3N2 strains, with an efficacy rate for adults at 47 percent and children ages 6 months through 17 years at 61 percent. That means it cuts the chances of the recipient getting the flu by almost half or even more, and those who do get it won't get as sick.

And it's not like vaccines cause autism. The 1995 British study that linked the measles/mumps/rubella vaccine with the condition has been discredited and disproven multiple times over – it turns out the lead author had been paid by attorneys seeking to file lawsuits against vaccine manufacturers. And a new Danish study that followed 657,461 children born from 1999 to 2010 has concluded vaccinations do not increase the risk for autism, do not trigger autism in susceptible children, and there is no association with the clustering of autism cases after vaccination.

But more than 120 N.M. babies and toddlers have gotten so very sick with the flu this year they had to be hospitalized. Meanwhile the state of Washington, home to a strong anti-vaxer contingent, has declared an emergency because of a measles outbreak.

Vaccinations are essential to a healthy population because they are predicated on herd immunity – when enough people are vaccinated and immune to a disease, its transmission is reduced or eliminated. Those who are too medically fragile to tolerate vaccinations – individuals with severely compromised immune systems or true allergies to the ingredients – depend on the rest of us to get vaccinated so diseases don't spread.

And when we don't, 206 Americans get the measles in the first two months of 2019 (mainly unvaccinated children under age 10), even though the United States eradicated measles in 2000. And more than 120 babies and toddlers in New Mexico get the flu.

Last week the U.S. Senate's Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions called for a national campaign – like the one against smoking – to counter the public health threat posed by anti-vaccine groups. The World Health Organization has put vaccine hesitancy on its 2019 list of Top 10 Global Threats. Measles killed 110,000 people worldwide in 2017. More than 80,000 Americans died of the flu in the 2017-18 season.

Landen says that's because "the influenza vaccine is one of our most effective interventions, and people are not using it enough. Adults make the decisions to get children vaccinated, so we need the adults to make better decisions to help us reduce our child influenza hospital rate."

This flu season is running longer and stronger, so we are doubling down on our ask from January:

"It's not too late to get that flu shot — for all our sakes."

*This editorial first appeared in the Albuquerque Journal. It was written by members of the editorial board and is unsigned as it represents the opinion of the newspaper rather than the writers.*