

# Dr. Jay Bhattacharya Chosen to Lead National Institutes of Health



Many years ago, I was at the wedding of a good friend, a guy who everyone seemed to like. He was/is humble, considerate, kind, and down to earth. I remember telling his mother while at the wedding that I would tell anyone that, "If you don't like him, then the problem is you."

I also feel that way about Stanford health economist Jay Bhattacharya. Jay's nomination by President-elect Trump to be Director of the National Institutes of Health has been a long time coming and is a hopeful signal that national health research policy is headed in the right direction.[https://read.amazon.com/kp/card?asin=B0C29RC8ZB&preview=inline&linkCode=kpe&ref\\_=cm\\_sw\\_r\\_kb\\_dp\\_8GEV5Y6TS7110NRA0CTX](https://read.amazon.com/kp/card?asin=B0C29RC8ZB&preview=inline&linkCode=kpe&ref_=cm_sw_r_kb_dp_8GEV5Y6TS7110NRA0CTX)

Jay was right about all the big things during the Covid pandemic and was an important counter to the destructive hubris of lockdown and mandate-promoting public health leaders

and scientists in the US. Along with Martin Kulldorff and Sunetra Gupta, Jay took enormous personal and professional risks in drafting the [Great Barrington Declaration](#) in October of 2020. In response to the highly age-stratified mortality of Covid-19 and with the threat of serious collateral damage of continuing lockdowns, school closures, and mandates, the GBD instead promoted the policy of focused protection for vulnerable elderly and infirm people while allowing young and healthy people to live their lives.

The virus was going to infect everyone eventually and establish herd immunity, and there was no evidence that a vaccine (none approved at the time) would stop that natural process. The big question was how to deal with a natural disaster without making the situation much worse. Thus, the debate was focused protection versus unfocused protection—sheltering everyone regardless of their risk of mortality or serious disease until the entire population could be vaccinated with a vaccine of unknown efficacy and net benefit.

At least that's the debate that should've happened. Unfortunately, it didn't. Jay and his GBD coauthors were attacked, threatened, and slandered. When Jay's research group published a study showing that the seroprevalence of Covid-19 in Santa Clara County in California was much higher than previously believed, it destroyed the delusion that the virus could be eliminated, that containment was at all possible. Many people didn't want to hear that, and Jay was subjected to numerous attacks in the media, including a defamatory [article](#) in BuzzFeed claiming he was funded by dark money and implied he used questionable methods because he was biased toward the study's outcome.

The fact that he shortly thereafter authored a paper showing very low seroprevalence in Major League Baseball franchises wasn't enough to prove his objectivity. The message put forth by the public health establishment would simply not allow any

dissent or debate. The policy needed to drive The Science™ and lower-case science could not be allowed to drive the policy.

I signed the Great Barrington Declaration the day it was published on October 4th, 2020. I had seen, and was greatly impressed by, interviews of Jay by Peter Robinson in March and April of 2020 and was heartened by Jay's calm display of knowledge and humility. Jay described in one of these interviews the uncertainty surrounding the number of people infected and the claims being made by experts like Anthony Fauci regarding the infection fatality rate:

*They don't know it and I don't know it. We should be honest about that. And we should be honest about that with people who make these policy decisions when making them. In a sense, people plug the worst case into their models, they project two to four million deaths, the newspapers pick up the two to four million deaths, the politicians have to respond, and the scientific basis for that projection...there's no study underlying that scientific projection.*

When asked about the potential for collateral damage to lockdowns, "It's not dollars versus lives, it's lives versus lives." An understanding of the responsibility to avoid collateral harm of lockdowns was essential yet was in extremely short supply. Jay was attacked for this nuanced message. He got emails from colleagues and administrators telling him that questioning the high infection fatality rate was irresponsible. Yet, someone had to do it. However, the interviews went viral, because Jay gave millions of people something they didn't have and desperately needed. He gave them hope.

As the year went on, Jay became the face of the opposition to unfocused protection, appearing in countless interviews and writing countless articles. He became an advisor to Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, who vowed to not lock down the people

of Florida again after an initial wave of closures. When waves of Covid inevitably hit Florida, Stanford students papered the campus with pictures of Jay next to Florida death rates, implying Jay's nuanced message was responsible for the deaths of thousands of people. When the age-adjusted mortality rate of Florida ended up being rather average compared to other states, including lockdown and mandate-happy California, no one apologized.

YouTube censored a public forum with Jay and Martin Kulldorff and Governor DeSantis, where they made claims about the hazards of continuous lockdowns, school closures, and mandates that months before wouldn't have been at all controversial. After the GBD was published, Jay and Martin were invited to the White House by Covid advisor Scott Atlas to discuss the idea of focused protection with President Trump. Despite that meeting, the political battle continued to be an uphill fight.

The response of federal officials was shameful. Fauci and White House Covid Advisor Deborah Birx boycotted the meeting. Then NIH Director Francis Collins called for a "swift and devastating takedown" of the GBD's premise and called the authors "fringe epidemiologists." There simply was no appetite at the highest levels for a nuanced message or any debate whatsoever. Media coverage of Jay and other Covid response critics continued to be toxic.

Yet Jay's appearances and message continued to inspire millions of people and give them hope. I began writing in support of focused protection and against the constant doom-saying that was harming everyone, especially children. I met Jay in the fall of 2021 because of my writing, at a conference organized by Brownstone Institute. "I think we are making a difference," he said after shaking my hand. Like many other people he had inspired to take a stance against Covid hysteria, I needed to hear that.

The next day, Jay was preparing to give his speech in front of

a small crowd in the ballroom, and I sat next to him while he reviewed his notes during the previous speaker's talk. Although he was dressed in a suit and tie, when glancing down, I noticed Jay had a hole in his dress shoe. This truly wasn't about money or even status. He was simply doing what he believed was morally right.

Later on, Jay helped spearhead a couple of Covid-related projects I was also involved in (I was there largely due to his influence). First was the Norfolk Group, which produced a resource document for the US Congress titled "Questions for a COVID-19 Commission" and the second was Florida's Public Health Integrity Committee formed by Governor DeSantis and led by Florida Surgeon General Joe Ladapo. Both groups attempted to bring accountability for the US public health response, and I believe they were successful in spotlighting just how wrong and harmful lockdowns and mandates were for the very public they were supposed to help.

During the initial Norfolk Group meeting, Jay often talked about the moment of no return, "crossing the Rubicon," as he put it, the moment that each one of us made a conscientious decision to stand up against the mob. He later recalled in an [interview](#) with Jordan Peterson: "At some point in summer of 2020, I decided—what is my career for? If it's just to have another CV line or a stamp, I've wasted my life—that I would speak no matter what the consequences were."

The world has benefitted from Jay's crossing of the Rubicon. His nomination, after years in the wilderness and on the "fringe" of public health and health policy, restores a sense that there is in fact justice in the world. Now he moves on to the significant task of reforming health research policy. We should be cheering him on all the way.

And if you don't like Jay, then the problem is you.

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