

Experts Outline Critical Public Health Questions and Pandemic Failings for COVID-19 Commission



Questions for a Covid-19
Commission

The Norfolk Group [published a blueprint](#) on Feb. 6 outlining critical public health questions for a potential COVID-19 commission. In their document, the group list specific questions on topics related to the nation's pandemic response.

In multiple chapters, a group of eight scientists and medical experts with a wide range of political views voiced criticisms of how the pandemic was handled by government agencies and individuals appointed by the Trump and Biden administrations. They summarize key background information and propose specific questions about the failure to protect older high-risk Americans, school closures, collateral lockdown harms, lack of robust public health data collected or made available, misleading risk communication, natural immunity, masks, testing, vaccine efficacy and safety, therapeutics and epidemiological modeling.

“America’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic failed on many

levels of government and in many aspects,” they wrote. “Certainly, deaths are unavoidable during a pandemic. However, too many U.S. policymakers concentrated efforts on ineffective or actively harmful and divisive measures, such as school closures that generated enormous societal damage without significantly lowering COVID-19 mortality while failing to protect high-risk Americans.”

Due to the government’s failed pandemic response, Americans were “hard hit both by the disease and by collateral damage generated by misguided pandemic strategies and decisions that ignored years of pandemic preparation guidance crafted by numerous public health agencies, nationally and internationally.”

The eight members of the Norfolk Group are:

- Jay Bhattacharya, MD, Ph.D., epidemiologist, health economist, and professor at Stanford University School of Medicine; founding fellow of the Academy of Science and Freedom.
- Leslie Bienen, MFA, DVM, veterinarian, zoonotic disease researcher, and faculty member at Oregon Health & Science University-Portland State University School of Public Health (through Dec. 31, 2022). She left in January 2023 to work in healthcare policy.
- Tracy Beth Høeg, MD, Ph.D., physician and Ph.D. epidemiologist in the Department of Epidemiology & Biostatistics, University of California-San Francisco, a clinical researcher in healthcare policy and practicing Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation physician.

- Martin Kulldorff, Ph.D., FDhc; epidemiologist and biostatistician; professor of medicine at Harvard University (on leave); founding fellow of the Academy of Science and Freedom.
- Marty Makary, MD, MPH, surgeon and healthcare policy scientist; professor at Johns Hopkins University.
- Margery Smelkinson, Ph.D., infectious disease scientist and microscopist whose research predominantly focuses on host/pathogen interactions.
- Steven Templeton, Ph.D., immunologist; associate professor at Indiana University School of Medicine.
- Ram Duriseti, MD, Ph.D., emergency room physician and computational engineer for medical decision making; associate professor at Stanford School of Medicine.

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This document was prepared and written only by its eight authors. The group stated that no other person or entity discussed its content or saw a draft or the final version before publication.

The experts convened in May 2022 at an in-person meeting in Norfolk, Connecticut, organized by the Brownstone Institute. They wrote and edited the document over the following six months and named themselves the Norfolk group after the place where the meeting was held.