Mistakes at CDC and FDA Reveal Unsafe Storage Practices for Deadly Viruses

Citizens’ Council for Health Freedom Says Government is Not Only Careless in Handling Dangerous Viruses but is Actually Creating Lethal Superbugs

ST. PAUL, Minn.—Three recent, startling discoveries of dangerous government laboratory practices show why controversial federal research to lethalize pathogens could put Americans’ health and lives at risk.

Twila Brase, co-founder and president of Citizens’ Council for Health Freedom (CCHF, www.cchfreedom.org), a Minnesota-based national organization dedicated to preserving patient-centered health care and protecting patient and privacy rights, says the mishandling of potentially dangerous viruses by government agencies, combined with government efforts to lethalize some pathogens, is a telling glimpse into the unsafe practices affecting Americans’ health and safety.

Earlier this month, the Food and Drug Administration announced that six forgotten vials of the deadly smallpox virus, dating back multiple decades, were found in an FDA lab on the National Institutes of Health campus. More than 300 other sealed vials containing biological materials such as dengue, influenza, Q fever, rickettsia and other possible unknown viruses were also found when scientists were preparing to relocate the lab.

In another incident, as many as 75 scientists at the Centers for Disease Control may have been exposed to anthrax last month when workers in three labs handled the virus that was supposed to have been deactivated, but was not. The labs were unequipped to handle dangerous pathogens and the lab workers moved and experimented with the samples without wearing protective gear.

And in a third case, a CDC lab accidentally contaminated a relatively non-harmful flu sample with a dangerous H5N1 bird flu strain that has led to the deaths of 386 people since 2003. Afterward, federal officials announced the temporary closing of the CDC anthrax and flu laboratories in Atlanta and halted all shipments of all infectious agents from the labs.

“Scientists say lab incidents like these are more common than people think,” Brase said. “The American public should know the potentially deadly materials we are entrusting to either incompetent, hurried or unfocused government employees. Government officials wants Americans
to entrust them with their health care and their private medical data, yet six deadly vials that are decades old were shoved in a corner, only to be discovered by accident. They lost track of six vials of live smallpox. How can we trust government with more than 300 million lives?”

Brase went on to say that not only are dangerous materials and deadly viruses being handled improperly, but government researchers are actually working to make pathogens more lethal—creating superbugs as part of experimentation.

“Creating incurable pathogens is a huge controversy among the scientific community,” Brase said. “Researchers may be trying to understand what some other countries around the world might be working on, but if our government is incapable of properly storing dangerous viruses, why would we want it to create superbugs or trust it to protect us from them?

“Americans must understand the dangers and implications of government scientists creating things we may not be able to kill but that could kill us,” she added. “All research is not good, positive or healthy. Some is downright frightening. The public needs to talk to their members of Congress about this danger, especially in light of these alarming incidents that prove that government labs have a disturbing history of unsafe practices.”

Alongside the smallpox discovery, 10 additional vials were found with unclear labeling. The smallpox and other vials were sent to the CDC in Atlanta for testing, where two of the smallpox vials were found to contain the live virus.

Smallpox was declared eradicated in 1980, and only two laboratories were permitted to house samples of the virus: the CDC in Atlanta and a lab in Russia. Experts say that once the virus was eradicated, labs all around the world were asked to destroy all smallpox specimens. The fact that several were left lying around for decades illustrates, at best, irresponsible government storage practices of dangerous materials.

CCHF president and co-founder Twila Brase, R.N., has been called one of the “100 Most Powerful People in Health Care” and one of “Minnesota’s 100 Most Influential Health Care Leaders.” Brase, a public health nurse, has been interviewed by CNN, Fox News, Minnesota Public Radio, NBC Nightly News, NBC’s Today Show, NPR, New York Public Radio, the Associated Press, Modern Healthcare, TIME, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post and The Washington Times, among others. She is at the forefront of informing the public of crucial health issues, such as intrusive wellness and prevention initiatives in Obamacare, patient privacy, informed consent, the dangers of “evidence-based medicine” and the implications of state and federal health care reform.

For more information or to interview Twila Brase, president and co-founder of Citizens’ Council for Health Freedom, contact Deborah Hamilton, Hamilton Strategies, 215.815.7716, 610.584.1096, DHamilton@HamiltonStrategies.com.