

Pegylated Politics

PEG, or polyethylene glycol, is used in many different ways. It is used in the pharmaceutical industry to hide drugs from the immune system, preventing antibody production which would make the drugs ineffective.

PEG is being used in the production of COVID vaccines. The majority of the vaccine candidates in late stage clinical trials are mRNA vaccines. mRNA is one of the least stable molecules, and if injected into a person, will immediately be destroyed by the body's defenses. It has to be hidden and PEG can create a little bubble allowing the mRNA to elude the body until it can safely generate the immune response that vaccines are designed for.

Another method of vaccine production is using the viruses themselves, sometimes live and attenuated, sometimes dead, to stimulate immunity. This has had its problems. Sometimes the dead virus fails to stimulate the immune system sufficiently. Sometimes the attenuated live virus can cause an infection. But, in general, these vaccines have been safe and confer immunity.

mRNA vaccines have been around for about 20 years and NOT A SINGLE ONE has gotten to market! These vaccines are ineffective because the mRNA gets destroyed before viral protein production. When in the middle of a pandemic, why would we want to use technology that hasn't had one success in 20 years?? Production of live virus is needed to generate traditional vaccines and mRNA can be made at a far lower cost to the manufacturer. The efficacy of the vaccine is second to profitability.

At this time, we should be concerned with protecting each other, working together to slow the pandemic, and getting a vaccine for all, without cutting corners for the sake of profits. Prioritizing profit will pervert the process of developing a safe and effective vaccine that needs to be shared with the world. The reality is that pharmaceutical companies are hiding their true motives, just like they are hiding their mRNA behind PEG.



Capitalism is a Public Health Disaster

If we didn't think COVID was enough of a public health risk, we've recently been hit by heat waves in California. With the heat comes heat related illnesses, wildfires, and smoke. We're basically in the middle of a public health disaster made worse!

With no real efforts to stop climate change or prevent future pandemics, we can expect only more of the same. Unless we reject this grim future, and fight for one in which public health is a priority, not an afterthought.

A Game of Chance

Over the past few months, we've heard of a number of potential treatments being pushed for COVID-19 while vaccine development is still underway. Some sound legitimate, like using convalescent blood plasma or Remdesivir. However, the majority are either a new 'snake oil,' like hydroxychloroquine or oleandrin. And others are downright deadly, like the push for herd immunity.

Billions of dollars have been given to a number of pharmaceutical companies to develop a vaccine during this time, but how much longer can we allow the government along with these companies to play this game of chance with our lives? Close to a million people have died globally so far, over 7,000 of which were healthcare workers. And the numbers will continue to rise if things go on the same way. If there's anything to learn from this pandemic, it's that the government and pharmaceutical companies don't have our interest in mind, it will depend on us to push for a safe and effective vaccine.

The World Gets Sicker, They Get Richer

Kaiser released their most recent quarterly financial report. Despite the reduction of elective procedures, they were still able to celebrate a net income of \$4.5 billion for the quarter ending June 30th.

It is impossible to celebrate the victory of the bosses when we know that there are millions of people who have lost their jobs including the many Kaiser workers who have been furloughed. We can't celebrate when we know that there are still millions of people who are uninsured and lack access to healthcare, including the many who can't afford the expensive cost of Kaiser insurance. We can't celebrate while our world gets sicker and Kaiser gets richer.