

WesternU Public Health Club Monthly NewsLetter

September Edition



Club Updates

Hi everyone!

We added a section to our newsletter titled “Policy Changes” where we plan to share important updates on new regulations, legislation, and public health policies that may affect our community. We’re also excited to introduce an “Upcoming Events” section to keep you informed about upcoming club events and volunteer opportunities!



U.S. Ends Funding for mRNA Vaccine Research

The Trump administration announced it is canceling nearly \$500 million in contracts to develop new mRNA vaccines, a decision praised by vaccine critics but condemned by many public health and biosecurity experts. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said the move reflects a shift away from mRNA for respiratory viruses, claiming it poses “more risk than benefit.” Experts strongly disagree, warning the decision undermines pandemic preparedness, weakens national security, and rolls back progress on a technology that safely saved millions of lives during COVID-19.

Harlem Hospital Linked to Legionnaires’ Deaths

New York City health officials traced a deadly Legionnaires’ disease outbreak in Harlem to cooling towers atop Harlem Hospital and a nearby city-run construction site. The outbreak, which is now declared over, killed seven people and sickened 114, with six still hospitalized. The city has since disinfected all affected towers and is considering stricter prevention measures, including more frequent Legionella testing and higher fines for violations. Critics argue the response came too late, noting Harlem Hospital was tied to a similar outbreak in 2021.

One Health Needed to Tackle H5N1 in Dairy Cattle

A new Journal of Dairy Science review warns that the H5N1 outbreak in U.S. dairy cattle is unprecedented and requires a One Health response. The virus spreads rapidly among cows and farms, with transmission routes still unclear. Authors emphasize that dairy farms function as ecosystems where animals, people, and environments interact, making containment complex. They call for stronger biosecurity, expanded surveillance, and collaboration across producers, veterinarians, and government to protect both animal and human health.



Policy Changes



One Big Beautiful Bill Act (the Act)

Current Policy

- The grad PLUS loan allows students to borrow up to the cost of their graduate program

New Policies

- For graduate school (masters): borrowing will be capped at \$20,500 a year with a lifetime graduate school loan limit of \$100,000
- For professional graduate degree (medical/law school): borrowing will be capped at \$50,000 a year and their lifetime cap increased from \$138,500 to \$200,000
- Parents and caregivers who use parent PLUS loans to help students pay for college will also see new loan limits. They will be capped at \$20,000 a year and, in aggregate, at \$65,000 per child.
- The law also sets a new lifetime limit, for undergrad and graduate loans combined, at \$257,500 per person.
- For graduate students, new limits will make it harder for lower- and middle-income borrowers to attend more expensive graduate programs
- Loan repayment programs vary based on accumulated debt and income. See the attached reference for more information.

The West Coast Alliance

What It Is

- Amid changes to the CDC and its Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, the states of Oregon, Washington, and California have worked together to create The West Coast Alliance, a new partnership aimed at creating and maintaining evidence-based recommendations for vaccines with the help of reputable physicians, experts, and organizations in the medical and public health fields.

Potential Implications | Thoughts as a Student

- With this partnership being a direct action against the Trump Administration, its influence on the CDC, and recent changes to immunization policies, we could have varying vaccination recommendations to use as future healthcare providers.
- It is imperative we stay vigilant with understanding who pushes which recommendations as we practice, since such advice can be swayed depending on the employed perspective. As we can see with this example alone, the West Coast Alliance states their objective of promoting evidence-based recommendations as a response to their view of the CDC becoming more of a “political tool” that risks public health.

Upcoming Events

1. **College of Veterinary Medicine One Health Symposium, November 14th 4-8pm:** Food will be provided to those that RSVP. Students from all colleges are welcome to come! Details to follow!
2. **Fall in the Farm Health Fair, Saturday November 22:** Event details to follow!
3. **Project Horseshoe Farm, Tuesdays 10am-12pm:** come join us in helping a local adult community center host activities for their members, such as Bingo, arts & crafts, and stretching! [Sign up here for a shift](#)
4. **Phone Buddy Program:** This program pairs WesternU students with Pomona community members facing challenges like social isolation and loneliness. Help us foster meaningful connections and companionship for those in need! If interested, please sign up [with this form](#) and feel free to email us with any questions.

References

1. <https://www.npr.org/sections/shots-health-news/2025/08/06/nx-s1-5493544/rfk-defunding-mrna-vaccine-research>
2. <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/new-york/articles/2025-08-29/death-toll-from-legionnaires-disease-outbreak-in-new-york-city-rises-to-7-and-infections-hit-114>
3. <https://www.feedstrategy.com/animal-health-veterinary/livestock-poultry-diseases/avian-influenza/news/15753144/one-health-response-required-to-address-h5n1-outbreak-report-says>
4. <https://www.npr.org/2025/07/24/nx-s1-5477646/student-loan-repayment-forgiveness-trump>
5. <https://apnews.com/article/cdc-west-coast-vaccines-trump-fd5ce557532a3c9f37b77ff9f14b07b9>
6. <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2025/09/03/california-oregon-and-washington-to-launch-new-west-coast-health-alliance-to-uphold-scientific-integrity-in-public-health-as-trump-destroys-cdcs-credibility/>