

Americans facing threat of infectious diseases at the border

They put U.S. families at risk and migrant families, too.



Photo by: Marco Ugarte

A migrant child smiles as he waits to be treated for an unknown infection on his body at the Jesus del Buen Pastor del Pobre y el Migrante shelter, in Tapachula, Mexico, Saturday, June 1, 2019. President Donald Trump threatened a 5% tariff on Mexican imports unless America's southern neighbor cracked down on Central American migrants trying to cross the U.S. border. (AP Photo/Marco Ugarte) **FILE **

ANALYSIS/OPINION:

We all know about the unfolding humanitarian disaster at the border and its aftermath. Besides the general chaos, the inherent danger faced by those migrating encompasses sex trafficking, sex assaults and the disruption of lives brought by thousand-mile treks through dangerous environments.

But that's not all. We are now in a world where infectious diseases, some like measles thought eradicated, have returned and are spreading globally. Understandably, we keep hearing from the government that vaccines are imperative. Whether you have been vaccinated or not, the call is now for everyone to make sure they're immune through blood tests or additional shots. That's the right response.

But what the federal government hasn't told you is that during this dangerous time requiring admonitions that vaccines are imperative, there is no requirement for proof of vaccination for anyone entering this country except for those migrating legally.

TOP STORIES

Rapper cut from Lollapalooza's lineup over crude, homophobic remarks

Biden's infrastructure bill doubles annual funding for commission run by Manchin's wife

Popular protests, violent crackdown put Biden's Iran policy to the test

The team at Independent Women's Voice, of which I'm president, has discovered through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that while the government requires proof of vaccination from those seeking to migrate, there is no similar requirement for people visiting on non-immigrant visas — and that is through ports we control.

With the southern border being overwhelmed with 100,000 people a month being apprehended attempting to enter illegally, there is no ability to enforce any sort of massive health check. The border patrol does its best to notice who may be showing symptoms of illness, but there's nothing to be done about those who are unaware they're ill with no obvious indications of sickness.

As of May 31, we have 981 cases of measles in 26 states. For a disease we thought eradicated, we are now on track to surpass 1,000 this week, eclipsing the previous record in 1994, which reported 963 for the entire year.

Then we have infectious diseases with no vaccine or cure. Last week, Customs

and Border Protection announced “U.S. Border Patrol agents assigned to the Del Rio Station apprehended a large group of 116 individuals Thursday. ... ‘This large group from Africa further demonstrates the complexity and severity of the border security and humanitarian crisis at our Southwest border,’ said Chief Raul Ortiz. This is the first large group apprehended in the Del Rio Sector and the first large group of people from Africa — including nationals from Angola, Cameroon and Congo — apprehended on the Southwest border this year.”

Congo is experiencing the worst Ebola outbreak in recent memory, with more than 2,000 confirmed cases and over 1,300 fatalities since late August.

Zika also remains an issue. In Brazil, more than 19,000 cases were reported there last year. Immigrants, legal and illegal, and visitors are coming from countries beset with measles, yellow fever, Zika, Ebola, typhoid fever, mumps, cholera, etc.

USA Today reported this week, “Since the beginning of fiscal year 2019, which began Oct. 1, 2018, agents across the U.S.-Mexican border have apprehended more than 27,000 people from 37 countries other than Mexico, according to Border Patrol statistics. Del Rio Sector’s apprehensions of non-Mexican migrants this year has increased by nearly 500% over the same period in fiscal year 2018.”

The CDC warns, “The large movement of people across the United States and Mexico border has led to an increase in health issues, particularly infectious diseases such as tuberculosis.”

Infectious diseases are an equal opportunity scourge. The catastrophe at the border is a humanitarian one at every level, which does not discriminate. It puts U.S. families at risk, but also in as much danger, if not even more, are the migrant families themselves caught in a vortex encouraged by cynical American politicians who believe it will pay political dividends as they attack and stop efforts of the Trump administration to address and manage the crisis.

We hear arguments that attempting to control the border and stop the chaos at the border is racist or xenophobic. The opposite is true. The fact is, allowing this to continue because Democrats remain obsessed with political vengeance against the president first harms those migrating. To not secure the border and manage immigration is the abandonment of people seeking a better life in this country. Measles, tuberculosis, typhus, the mysterious polio-like virus striking children and Zika, are active in this country.

Yet, if a migrant manages to escape the caravans unscathed, they travel to the interior of the country, where social services are overwhelmed as cities face the influx of tens of thousands of migrants. This collapse of assistance infrastructure forces many to sleep on the street or in tent cities where disease and infection spread.

Something must be done. IWV.org has launched a petition for the White House asking the administration to redouble its efforts to secure the border using every method possible, while asking the CDC to expand the rule requiring proof of vaccination to everyone entering the country legally. The situation at the border is chaos, but to not require proof of vaccination at ports we control, like the airports, is madness as infectious diseases, both curable and incurable, remain an issue.

Far worse than ever before, we face an urgent infectious disease threat to public health for both U.S. citizens and unvaccinated or at-risk (the very young, elderly, immune-compromised) immigrants themselves. This is not a political issue. If we are serious about saving lives and stopping a humanitarian crisis affecting citizen and migrant alike, securing the border and requiring proof of vaccination for everyone entering the country legally must be done.

• *Tammy Bruce, president of Independent Women's Voice, author and Fox News contributor, is a radio talk-show host.*

Source:

<https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2019/jun/6/americans-facing-threat-of-infectious-diseases-at/>

[Disclaimer]