

Committee to Protect Health Care: Wisconsin doctors plead with Sen. Johnson to stop pushing dangerous horse medicine, disinformation on COVID-19 and vaccines

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MADISON — Wisconsin physicians today gathered virtually to share a message with Senator Ron Johnson: Please stop pushing Ivermectin as a cure for COVID-19, and stop discouraging trust in the safe, effective vaccine that actually prevents COVID-19. They also had a message for Wisconsin residents, asking them to listen to the information being shared by the majority of qualified health professionals, not the divisive politician. Their calls came as hospitals are filling up, with nearly [88 percent](#) of hospital beds in Wisconsin full.

“As not just a physician but also a resident of Wisconsin, it’s shocking and appalling that any grown person, let alone our elected senator, would promote Ivermectin as a treatment for COVID-19,” said Dr. Bob Freedland, MD, Wisconsin State Lead for the Committee to Protect Health Care and an ophthalmologist practicing in La Crosse. “To be quite clear, Ivermectin is a drug used to deworm livestock, and researchers [haven’t found it](#) to have the benefits against COVID-19 that some like Johnson try to claim it has. Senator Ron Johnson, if you really want to save lives from COVID-19, please stop horsing around and start promoting measures that actually work, like masks and vaccines.”

On August 20th, Sen. Ron Johnson positively [tweeted a piece](#) written by Dr. Pierre Kory, who advocates for using Ivermectin in COVID-19 cases, and indicated that the National Institutes of Health should start using it as treatment. Sen. Johnson invited

Dr. Kory and other doctors promoting fringe theories to a [Congressional hearing](#) to air their minority takes on COVID-19 treatment. In the meantime, Wisconsinites have been calling the Wisconsin Poison Center about Ivermectin at a [significantly higher rate](#) than last year with side effects like nausea, diarrhea, and vomiting. [It's recommended](#) to call the poison center right away if Ivermectin is ingested.

“It shames me to see our senator pushing false cures and conspiracy theories when we know how to prevent this disease,” said Dr. Rebecca Beach, a family medicine physician in Richland Center. “Physicians in Wisconsin and across the country have been working overtime for the past year and a half to treat COVID and to try to figure out how to best deal with it when someone does fall ill, including using ventilators when they are needed to save lives — when they sometimes are the only thing that can save a life. Sen. Johnson, who is not a doctor, is trying to undermine this work, and I find that frustrating beyond belief. Of course, no doctor wants a patient to have to be put on a ventilator, but unlike Senator Johnson, we want to do what has to be done to save lives, not just save our political bases.”

Sen. Johnson on August 20th also joined a conservative radio show and [claimed](#), incorrectly, that ventilators haven't been saving lives and do more harm than good. On another radio show recently, [Johnson criticized](#) the Food and Drug Administration's move to grant the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine full approval. The Wisconsin Department of Health Services [urges everyone](#) who is eligible to get the vaccine, which has been given to millions of people over months and undergone extensive inspection and reviews.

“With position and privilege comes great responsibility, and time and time again Sen. Johnson has not just shirked his responsibility, but actually spoken quite irresponsibly,” said Dr. Scott Walker, a family medicine physician in Prairie Du Chien. “From promoting the unproven hydroxychloroquine as a cure for COVID-19 to falsely saying that those who've gotten COVID-19 don't need to get vaccinated, Johnson has repeatedly used his platform in ways that have likely contributed to the spread of the delta variant and the prolonging of this awful pandemic. As physicians have been saying since last year, handling this pandemic shouldn't be about partisan politics, it should be about protecting health, saving lives, and getting back to normal safely.”

About the Committee to Protect Health Care

The Committee to Protect Health Care, formerly known as the Committee to Protect Medicare, is a national mobilization of doctors, health care professionals, and advocates who are building a pro-patient health care majority in Congress and in states so that we can live in an America where everyone has the health care they need to thrive. To learn more: www.committeetoprotect.org