

Committee to Protect Health Care: Wisconsin physicians blast Sen. Johnson for hosting event to spread COVID-19 disinformation

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MADISON, Wis. – Wisconsin physicians blasted Sen. Ron Johnson for hosting a U.S. Senate event today that gives leading spreaders of COVID-19 disinformation a high-profile platform to perpetuate falsehoods about vaccines, unproven cures and evidence-based safety measures. Johnson hosted what he called a “panel discussion on the global pandemic response,” featuring a dozen doctors who are tied to COVID-19 disinformation and conspiracy theories.

“Once again, Sen. Ron Johnson is using his national platform to give validity to unproven, medically inaccurate disinformation that endangers people, prolongs the COVID-19 pandemic and makes our jobs as physicians trying to save lives more difficult,” said Dr. Ann Helms, a critical care neurologist in Milwaukee. “Sen. Johnson should be using his time and his position to help provide relief to overcrowded hospitals and support a health care infrastructure that is on the verge of collapse because of consistently high patient volumes. Sen. Johnson should be doing more to get people protected against COVID-19 in the first place by being vaccinated. Wisconsin deserves real, serious solutions to a pandemic that has killed more than 850,000 Americans, including nearly 12,000 [Wisconsinites.](#)”

Johnson’s panel included:

- Dr. Pierre Kory, another prominent advocate of ivermectin who pushes baseless [conspiracy theories](#) claiming that the scientific community is

suppressing information about ivermectin to protect profits from vaccinations. Kory [wrote an article](#) about a COVID-19 treatment protocol that was pulled after reviewers discovered he had used inaccurate data to reach a false conclusion.

- Dr. Jay Bhattacharya, a co-author of the Great Barrington Declaration that opposed public health safeguards and advocated instead for COVID-19 to spread unchecked among younger people. In addition to opposing vaccinations, Bhattacharya also [opposes masks](#) and testing: A 2021 event he held with Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis was pulled from YouTube because it spread information that contradicted scientific evidence.
- Dr. Richard Urso, a co-founder of [America's Frontline Doctors](#), a group of physicians that opposes vaccines, masks and the preponderance of science surrounding COVID-19. AFLDS [promotes conspiracy theories](#) about government suppression of information about ivermectin, while charging \$90 to write prescriptions for off-label ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine.
- Dr. Paul Marik, another ivermectin proponent who in 2020 pushed a [failed treatment for sepsis](#) – life-threatening infections that spread throughout the body – as a treatment for COVID-19. Made up of a cocktail of steroid hydrocortisone and vitamins C and B1, Marik's failed sepsis treatment became the foundation for his unproven COVID-19 [MATH+ Hospital Treatment Protocol](#), the same protocol Kory wrote about in his discredited journal article.

Marik and Kory are co-founders of [Front Line COVID-19 Critical Care Alliance](#), which champions ivermectin, downplays vaccinations and promotes other dubious, baseless medical claims.

Johnson's other panelists included: Dr. Peter McCullough, who [falsely claimed](#) that people younger than 50 didn't need to be vaccinated against COVID-19 and denied asymptomatic spread; Dr. Harvey Risch, who advocates treating COVID-19 with [hydroxychloroquine](#), which multiple studies continue to show is useless against the virus; and Dr. [Robert Malone](#), who claims to be an early pioneer of the technology behind Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine yet has not received the spotlight as other vaccine innovators and is now a vaccine skeptic.

“Sen. Ron Johnson isn’t going to save lives, protect people or get people back safely in schools and to work by rolling out a clown car of COVID-19 conspiracy theorists who will only give people very bad and dangerous ideas,” said Dr. Robert Freedland ophthalmologist in La Crosse. “Wisconsinites deserve to know that Sen. Johnson continues to give a megaphone to notorious COVID-19 disinformation doctors that include champions of ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine. Trust us, the vast majority of doctors and scientists do not place any stock in these people who work on the fringe of medicine, at best, and in a fantasy world, at worst.”

“I’m deeply concerned that Senator Johnson’s disinformation campaign will only lead to more sickness, and it is already prolonging the pandemic,” said Dr. William Reed, a cardiothoracic surgeon in La Crosse. “Countless physicians and health care professionals across Wisconsin who have served selflessly on the frontlines of this pandemic are more than ready to testify at Sen. Johnson’s hearing about what we see with our own eyes, that the [overwhelming majority](#) of patients in our ICUs at this time are unvaccinated. We’ve been watching painfully what happens to unvaccinated people in our hospitals — how they die more frequently and are more likely to have long-haul COVID-19. What Wisconsin families need now more than ever is accurate, evidence-based information that can protect people.”