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Kennedy prepares to name new vaccine panel members

The list of names includes at least three people who have questioned the safety of messenger RNA shots against Covid.

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Participants listen to speakers during a meeting of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices in Atlanta in June. | Mike Stewart/AP

Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is considering appointing seven members to the new CDC independent vaccine advisory panel — many of whom share his skepticism of Covid-19 vaccines or the pharmaceutical industry — according to an internal list seen by POLITICO and confirmed by two people with knowledge of the list.

The list of names — which was first made public by Dr. Jeremy Faust, an emergency physician at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston — includes at least three people who have questioned the safety of messenger RNA vaccines against Covid.



The panel is slated to meet this month, on Sept. 18 and 19, and the committee is expected to vote to update recommendations for Covid-19 vaccines, as well as other immunizations.

POLITICO reached out to all seven people listed for comment, several of whom noted they have not been officially asked to join the committee.

An HHS spokesperson told POLITICO “you will hear it from us when there are [new] members to announce.”

Kennedy, in June, fired the entire panel of 17 outside experts and replaced them with seven new members who are more closely aligned with his own views of vaccines. Kennedy has long questioned the safety and effectiveness of mRNA technology and, before becoming health secretary, said he [believes that autism comes from vaccines](#).

Last week, Kennedy led an effort to push out the director of the CDC, Susan Monarez, just weeks after she was sworn in. ACIP recommendations must be approved by the CDC director before they are official, and [Monarez had refused to agree to “rubber stamp” the committee’s decisions before she was ousted](#), she told Richard Besser, CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and a former acting CDC director.

The dates for the ACIP meeting were announced shortly after HHS announced Monarez was fired.

It’s unclear whether new members will be able to join the panel before the September meeting. In past administrations, members have gone through a vetting process that takes months.

The list of potential members of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices includes Dr. Joseph Fraiman, an emergency medicine specialist in New Orleans. Fraiman

is the [lead author of a 2022 paper](#) that suggested Pfizer's and Moderna's vaccines posed a risk of serious adverse events based on a reanalysis of the drugmakers' late-stage trial results. But Fraiman and his coauthors couldn't break down their data by age, and other scientists criticized their methodology as flawed.

Reached for comment, Fraiman said he is not an ACIP member and did not say whether he plans to join the committee.

Fraiman also spearheaded the Hope Accord, a public petition [calling for Covid mRNA vaccines to be pulled from the market](#) and reevaluated for safety and effectiveness.

Pediatric cardiologist Kirk Milhoan, who is a senior fellow at the anti-mRNA Independent Medical Alliance, is also listed as a prospective ACIP member. Milhoan has claimed the Covid shots pose more harm than benefit and participated in a [2024 panel discussion on vaccine injuries](#) convened by Rep. [Marjorie Taylor Greene](#) (R-Ga.), a vocal Covid vaccine skeptic.

Dr. Raymond Pollak, who appears to be a transplant specialist with a history as a [hospital whistle blower](#), said he received a call gauging his interest in joining ACIP and was sent the necessary paperwork. He said he hasn't made up his mind "one way or another."

The list also includes Dr. Evelyn Griffin, a Louisiana-based obstetrician-gynecologist, Hillary Blackburn, clinically trained pharmacist, and Dr. John Gaitanis, a pediatric neurologist.



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