



ROBERT REDFIELD

DIRECTOR OF THE CDC

NationalJournal

Life in Brief

Born: July 10, 1951

Hometown: Bethesda, MD

Current Residence: Washington, D.C

Education:

- BS, Georgetown University, 1973
- MD, Georgetown University School of Medicine, 1977

Family:

- Wife: Joyce Hoke
- 6 children and 9 grandchildren

Work History:

- Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Administrator for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, 2018-present
- Professor of Microbiology and Immunobiology and Chief of Infectious Diseases and Vice Chair of Medicine, UMD School of Medicine, 2014-2018
- Co-founder and Director, University of Maryland's Institute of Human Virology, 1996-2018
- Physician and Medical Researcher/Founding Director, Department of Retroviral Research of the U.S. Military, 1977-1996 (Colonel)

Past and Present Board and Advisory Roles

- Past Board Member, Children's AIDS Fund International
- Past Member, President's Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS, 2005-2009
- Past Chair, International Subcommittee, 2006-2009
- Past Member, Office of AIDS Research Advisory Council at NIH
- Past Member, Advisory Anti-Infective Agent Committee of the FDA

Quick Summary

Virologist who served as the leading medical researcher in the US Army specializing in HIV/AIDS; spent twenty years as a professor and research director before becoming CDC chief

- Made key contributions to early research into HIV/AIDS over two decades at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research; created the staging system for treating those with the illness
- Guided the military's approach to fighting infectious disease, specifically leading research into possible vaccines for hepatitis B and HIV
- Advocated for policies deeply influenced by his Christian faith
- Led controversial AIDS screenings and vaccine trials while in the Army in the early 1990s
- Co-founded the Institute of Human Virology at UMD; developed innovative strategies to target host cell pathways to prevent disease and ran a clinical-care program for people with HIV
- As head of the CDC, has prioritized eliminating HIV and combatting the opioid epidemic before shifting focus to address COVID-19

Approach and Motivations

Motivated by personal experience to work for society-wide treatments aiding well-being

- Parents' lengthy careers as scientists at NIH prompted him to pursue medical research
- Persuaded military leadership to vaccinate soldiers for hepatitis B after witnessing a soldier infect his wife and child
- Driven by experiences observing inequity in medicine while researching in Africa
- Extensive background with vaccines influenced his policy objectives at the CDC, where he has firmly prioritized childhood immunization
- Motivated to pursue discipline in fighting addiction and eradicating disease based on deeply personal experiences, including his son's near-death from an opioid overdose

Policy Positions and Areas of Focus

Focused on diverse solutions to health issues

HIV/AIDS: *Aims to halt spread through vaccines, family values, and targeted bureaucratic action*

- Worked on the paper showing that HIV caused AIDS and that it is transmitted heterosexually
- Pushed the 1991 Bergalis Bill, which would have prohibited those infected with HIV from performing invasive medical procedures and permit doctors to test for AIDS without consent
- Staunch advocate for the 2003 President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, a multi-departmental approach offering billions for prevention, treatment, and care in Africa
- Top supporter of the "ABC of AIDS" in Africa, aiming to avert infection through abstinence, monogamy, and condoms as a last resort
- Changed his view to support needle exchange programs, stating in 2018 that "science evolves"
- Believes science has yielded strategies, like pre-exposure prophylaxis, and treatments to end HIV/AIDS by 2030 with an aggressive plan

Substance Abuse and Opioids: *Committed to expanding tools available to public health orgs*

- Proposed that every hospital spend over 10 percent of its budget to treat general addiction
- Wants the CDC to promote health education to confront stigma against drug use disorder
- Pushed to capture more data; directed states to provide data within 48 hours to help predict overdose locations and necessary resources
- Called for increase funding to bolster laboratory capacities and their local deployment, as well as to expand needle exchange programs and co-prescribe high-dose opioids with naloxone

Vaccines: *Proponent of exhaustive vaccination*

- Called for vaccines to be "fully utilized" in a speech to CDC staff, described immunization as public health's most powerful tool in 2019
- Urged DHS to vaccinate detainees against flu

Core Communities

Ties to prominent figures in the medical field and the political sphere

Distinguished Virologists and Medical Researchers: *Associated with important people in the fight against HIV/AIDS and other diseases*

- Worked closely with Dr. Robert Gallo, a monumental figure in the study of HIV/AIDS for over forty years; the two co-founded the Institute of Human Virology with eminent epidemiologist William Blattner
- Sat on the board of numerous health organizations, including the Fogarty International Center Advisory Board at NIH
- Received a lifetime services award from the Institute for Advanced Studies in Immunology and Aging

Christian Politicians and Influential Religious Medical Organizations: *Robust lobbying ties to Christian groups and congressmen addressing medical issues*

- Collaborated with former Rep. William Dannemeyer (R-CA) on advocating the 1991 Bergalis Bill and with former Senator Russell Long on lobbying Congress to fund experiments for his VaxSyn HIV vaccine
- Closely associated with W. Shepherd Smith and his Christian activist organization *Americans for Sound AIDS/HIV Policy*
- Wrote the foreword for Smith's 1990 book preaching Christian values and abstinence in the fight against HIV/AIDS and served on the board of Smith's *Children's AIDS Fund*
- Developed a close relationship with Ken Hackett, former President of the Catholic Relief Services and Ambassador to the Holy See

Relevant Financial Information**Few financial ties of note****Political Donations**

- Larry Hogan, 2018, \$50
- Kyle Lierman, 2010, \$250

Miscellaneous

- Stepped down from multiple positions upon his appointment to head the CDC
- Includes work as a consultant for Guidepoint Global LLC, adviser and chair at American Gene Technologies International LLC, and as a director for Children's AIDS Fund International
- Also halted work as a consultant for four law firms and as a speaker for a medical education company
- Sold his stock in Guidepoint Global and in Profectus BioSciences, a vaccine development company

Publications, Media, and Speaking**Modest speaker with his name fixed to numerous scientific publications****Publications: *Co-published many scientific articles, one book and one foreword***

- Favorite Subjects: Combatting HIV/AIDS, family values, Christianity, vaccines
- Published a 32-page booklet for teenagers explaining AIDS and the moral approach to fighting it; wrote a foreword to the 1990 book "*Christians in the Age of AIDS*"

Media: *TV appearances coincide with appointment as CDC director, generally interviewed by news outlets in the past*

- Preferred Outlets: National cable news like CNN and PBS; national newspapers like the NYT and WSJ; health news sites like STAT; White House press releases
- Favorite Subjects: COVID-19, HIV/AIDS, vaccines, opioids, influenza, suicide prevention
- Social Media Habits: Team often tweets links to COVID-19 resources, other priorities

Speaking: *Frequent engagements that track to medical issues he currently works on; worked as a speaker for a medical education company*

- Favorite Subjects: Vaccines, outbreaks, food-borne illnesses, substance abuse epidemics
- Preferred Audience: Policy think tanks like the Aspen Institute; public health talks in the DC area at schools of medicine like UMD; health associations like APHA

Congressional Testimony: *Mostly related to COVID-19 outbreak*

- Testified before various House Committees about the US international response to the COVID-19 epidemic, February/March, 2020
- Testified before House and Senate Committees where he called for more resources to help end the DRC Ebola outbreak, March/June, 2019
- Testified before the House and Senate Appropriations Committee on the HIV vaccine VaxSyn trial he ran, 1993

Family and Personal Background

Dedicated to lifelong medical research from an early age

- Household instilled in him a great love for science; parents worked at NIH with his mother working past 70
- Became more fascinated by the human condition, especially interested in viruses as delivery systems for medicine of the future
- Wanted more immediate fulfillment in science relative to parents; began working in labs studying retroviruses at Columbia University
- Received an honorary degree from New York Medical College, the Surgeon General's Physician Recognition Award, and named entrepreneur of the year from UMD in 2012

Family

- Met his wife Joyce, who is a nurse, while delivering babies
- He is a devout Roman Catholic with two of his five children also becoming doctors

Criticisms and Controversies

Two major controversies concerning his work with HIV/AIDS in the military

Drove effort to screen all military members for HIV and prohibit them from serving if they tested positive

- Criticized for punishing and mistreating soldiers for their HIV status in the 1980s
- Helped institute policy isolating soldiers in poor conditions until they were dishonorably discharged or developed AIDS
- Soldiers were sent to a chaplain who informed them of their test results while military police searched their belongings for evidence of homosexuality
- Many of the 6,000 men committed suicide or died from AIDS due to lack of medical coverage

Accused of scientific misconduct during development of a possible HIV/AIDS vaccine

- While in the Army, strongly pushed vaccine "VaxSyn" he co-developed with MicroGeneSys that never proved efficacy in clinical trials
- Despite a lack of scientific evidence and push-back over decisiveness of the data, helped convince Congress to pass \$20M in funding for human experiments
- Cleared during a military investigation, but reassigned to clinical duty after scandal
- Director of the Division of Clinical Pharmacology at Johns Hopkins, former Airforce Lt. Col. Craig Hendrix, stated "either he was egregiously sloppy with the data or it was fabricated"

Criticized for certain views on handling HIV/AIDS epidemic

- His support for the 1991 Bergalis Bill was criticized by the AIDS community
- Lambasted for writing in a 1990 book foreword that it is time "reject false prophets who preach quick-fix strategies of condoms and free needles" and "to reject those who try to replace God as judge"

COVID-19 Response

Key health official in charge of the CDC response to the virus. Charged with administrating testing and vaccine research

Relevant Positions

- Director of the CDC
- Member of the Coronavirus Task Force

Actions: Manages logistics, R&D, and coordination among executive branch depts

- Ordered the CDC to devise containment strategies and use surveillance to track new cases in early February 2020
- Coordinates operationalization of testing and resource management with HHS
- Advocated for the temporary suspension of travel to the United States on March 12
- Responsible for managing testing from CDC to the states, which was widely criticized for its initial delay and ineffectiveness due to faulty negative controls
- Directed the CDC to develop serologic tests; rather than diagnosing infections, they study the blood of those living in areas with a major outbreak to see if virologists can learn anything helpful about what can fight the disease, such as the presence of certain antibodies
- Frequently appears on radio shows and TV to emphasize the importance of social distancing

Statements: Straightforward press releases on new directives and data on the virus spread

- Provided initial testimony in early March that explained the severity of the outbreak and mapped out the federal response, including testing, vaccine development, coordination of agencies and other governments, distancing, and quarantining of infected individuals
- Committed to free coronavirus testing after persistent questioning from Rep. Katie Porter
- Twitter feed is dedicated to linking to resources on social distancing and health initiatives