

Report: Florida officials cut key data from vaccine study

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Dr. Joseph Ladapo speaks with reporters after the Florida Senate confirmed his appointment as the state's surgeon general on Feb. 23, 2022, in Tallahassee, Fla. An analysis that was the basis of a highly criticized recommendation from Florida's surgeon general cautioning young men against getting the COVID-19 vaccine omitted information that showed catching the virus could increase the risk of a cardiac-related death much more than getting the shot. That's according to drafts of the analysis obtained by the Tampa Bay Times. Credit: AP Photo/Brendan Farrington, File

An analysis that was the basis of a highly criticized recommendation from Florida's surgeon general cautioning young men against getting the COVID-19 vaccine omitted information that showed catching the virus could increase the risk of a cardiac-related death much more than getting the mRNA shot, [according to drafts](#) of the analysis obtained by the Tampa Bay Times.

The nonbinding recommendation made by Florida Surgeon General Joseph Ladapo last fall ran counter to the advice provided by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Ladapo, a Harvard-trained [medical doctor](#) who was appointed by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis in 2021 to head the Florida Department of Health, has drawn intense scrutiny over his shared resistance with the Republican governor to COVID-19 mandates for vaccines and masks and other [health](#) policies endorsed by the federal government.

The early drafts of the analysis obtained by the Times through a records request showed that catching COVID-19 could increase the chances of a cardiac-related death much more than getting the [vaccine](#), but that information was missing from the final version put out by the Florida Department of Health last October.

Ladapo said that the risk of men ages 18 to 39 having cardiac complications outweighed the benefits of getting the mRNA vaccine.

Matt Hitchings, an infectious disease epidemiologist and professor of biostatistics at the University of Florida, told the Times that it seems that sections of the analysis were omitted because they did not fit the narrative the surgeon general wanted to push.

"This is a grave violation of research integrity," Hitchings said. "(The

vaccine) has done a lot to advance the health of people of Florida and he's encouraging people to mistrust it."

In a statement on Twitter posted Saturday in response to the Times' story, Ladapo said, "It's not only unfortunate that COVID has corrupted scientists' ability to think clearly about epidemiology but also sad that people rush to defend a vaccine that has shown increased cardiovascular risk in multiple studies."

Last year, Ladapo released guidance recommending against vaccinations for healthy children, contradicting federal public health leaders whose advice says all kids should get the shots. In response, the American Academy of Pediatrics and its Florida chapter issued written statements reiterating support for vaccinating eligible children age 5 and older against COVID-19.

DeSantis, who is contemplating a run for the GOP [presidential nomination](#), also has requested that a [grand jury](#) be convened to investigate any wrongdoing with respect to the COVID-19 vaccines. DeSantis' request argues that [pharmaceutical companies](#) had a financial interest in creating a climate in which people believed that getting a coronavirus vaccine would ensure they couldn't spread the virus to others.

The Florida Supreme Court agreed to the request last December.

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