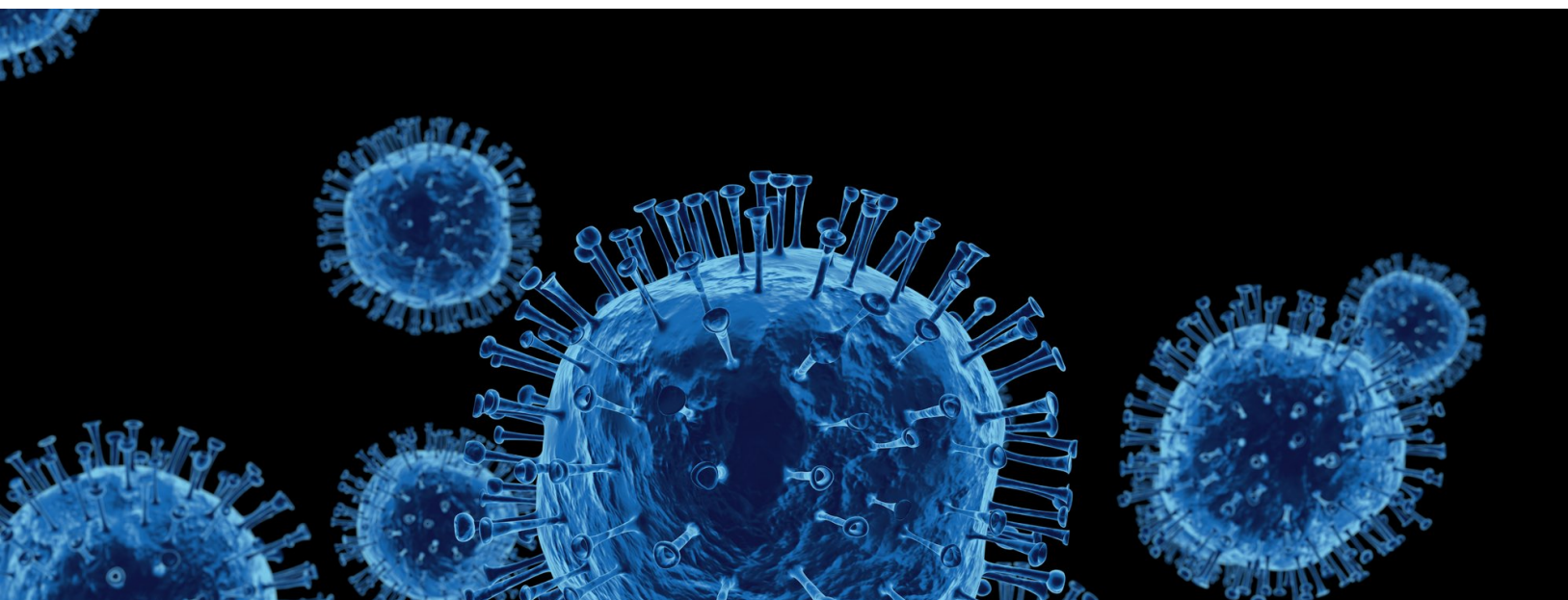




A US monkeypox pandemic can be prevented. COVID-19 has shown us how

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The next global pandemic may already be upon us. The Biden administration has declared monkeypox a [public health emergency](#) as cases topped 6,600 in the US. The rapid spread of the disease has prompted the World Health Organization to classify it as a [global health emergency](#). The last time the WHO took that step, it was responding to the emergence of COVID-19.

While the monkeypox virus spreads mostly through close contact with someone who is infected, our window for preparing for a mass outbreak is closing.

Perhaps the biggest takeaway from the COVID-19 pandemic is that government, at all levels, must consult and collaborate more closely with business leaders on combating a pandemic. This will minimize economic disruption, maximize workplace safety, and enable the government to mitigate public health consequences by responding rapidly.

At COVID-19's onset, business leaders had to adapt quickly, making decisions in an environment of uncertainty amid a rapidly shifting public health response. A costly lockdown became the default public policy option because the nation was unprepared.

Now, to help protect the economy, the public and private sectors should work together to identify which workers qualify as essential and how they can work as safely as possible in a public health emergency.

It's important to note that the public and private sectors were able to achieve great successes during these tumultuous times. Public-private collaborations enabled scientists to develop vaccines in record time. Private companies built on a decade of research partnerships, including with the National Institutes of Health, on a new vaccine type—based on messenger RNA and produced synthetically—and took on billions of dollars in risk. The result was a vaccine that offers high rates of efficacy and protection against severe illness, hospitalization, and death. However, the vaccine distribution system can be improved, particularly by leveraging private sector networks' strong existing patient contacts.

There were other critical victories as well: Greatly expanded use of telehealth helped many patients get the care they needed, remotely. An ambitious regulatory reform agenda enabled hospitals to adapt to surge capacity and brought many health care providers back to work. We must make certain necessary regulatory reforms that can help with this latest public health challenge remain in place.

Conversely, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted glaring shortcomings in our system and revealed how the US has chronically underinvested in several dimensions of public health, especially considering its underserved communities' acute vulnerability.

The nation should move towards a healthcare system that provides [better access](#), with a focus on the health disparities that the pandemic has so starkly highlighted. We saw this through COVID-19's impact on people with comorbidities such as diabetes and hypertension, those in nursing homes, and those with mobility-related disabilities.

A health care system that reimburses providers for maintaining health would raise overall levels of health and thus prepare Americans better for future public health crises and address issues of health equity. These make up the second lesson.

The third is that having accurate data is critical. Wastewater screening, for example, gave early warning of COVID spikes. Genomic sequencing was an essential tool for identifying new variants and developing ways to address them.

A global public-private partnership for genomic sequencing, along with mRNA technology, would be a powerful way to quickly address and respond to future pathogens and viral outbreaks.

The fourth lesson is that government, at all levels, must do more to prepare. For starters, the federal government ought to upgrade and constantly refresh the national stockpile of goods needed to fight a pandemic, such as personal protective equipment. It must also ensure that we have a strong supply chain for these items, which can be activated quickly in a crisis.

The federal government should reform its public health communications to be consistent and clear. The CDC needs to more proactively implement scientific guidance in real-world contexts. It should create a business advisory committee, modeled on the Department of

Homeland Security's critical infrastructure advisory committees, with representatives from diverse industries, to advise on the economic impacts of public health regulations and assist in pandemic planning.

State and local officials should consult with businesses to ensure public-sector support for essential public health emergency infrastructure. America's schools can also improve how they teach health education.

The final lesson from the COVID-19 pandemic concerns the way businesses themselves can better prepare. They should update their business plans now with lessons learned from the pandemic to be ready to shift operations as events require. They should embrace their roles as trusted information sources for their employees during a public health crisis. Businesses need relationships with trusted medical professionals who can guide their employee communications.

While these solutions are not necessarily easy, they are all common sense and draw from recent experience. Infectious diseases grow exponentially, not linearly. We must start applying these lessons now—and hope that it's not already too late to benefit from them in our fight against monkeypox.

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