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POLITICS

HHS Vaccine Expert to Detail Complaint in House Testimony

Rick Bright to outline risks of a coronavirus resurgence, warning of the ‘darkest winter in modern history’



Rick Bright is to address the House Committee on Energy and Commerce’s health subcommittee on Thursday.

PHOTO: TOYA SARNO JORDAN/BLOOMBERG NEWS

By [James V. Grimaldi](#)

May 14, 2020 6:00 am ET

A Department of Health and Human Services vaccine specialist is planning to tell a congressional committee Thursday he was reassigned for exposing department practices that posed public-health risks, including raising objections to the promotion of an antimalarial drug by the president.

In his prepared remarks for the House Committee on Energy and Commerce’s health subcommittee, Rick Bright, who has come forward as a whistleblower, said a lack of preparation by the Trump administration is causing the U.S. to face “unprecedented illness and fatalities” and a resurgence of the new coronavirus as early as this fall.

“Without clear planning and implementation of the steps that I and other experts have outlined, 2020 will be darkest winter in modern history,” Dr. Bright said in his prepared remarks.

MORE ON DR. BRIGHT’S DISPUTE

- [Federal Agency Finds Grounds to Investigate Complaint by HHS Official, His Lawyers Say](#) (May 8)
 - [Vaccine Expert Alleges Top U.S. Health Officials Resisted Coronavirus Warnings](#) (May 5)
 - [HHS Official Says He Was Ousted Over Coronavirus Drug Dispute](#) (April 22)
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Dr. Bright also said he resisted the president’s entreaties to make the drug hydroxychloroquine widely available as a remedy for Covid-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus.

“When I resisted efforts to promote and enable broad access to an unproven drug, chloroquine, to the American people without transparent information on the potential health risks, I was removed from BARDA,” said Dr. Bright, who ran the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, or Barda.

Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Stephen Hahn, whose employees worked with Dr. Bright on approving the use of hydroxychloroquine to treat Covid-19, said in an interview Wednesday that the approval followed science and peer-reviewed studies to guide the process.

A medical study and two federal agencies have since cast doubt on hydroxychloroquine’s effectiveness and safety.

Dr. Bright initially appeared to support the purchase of hydroxychloroquine. On March 19, Dr. Bright was copied on an email praising the work of Joe Hamel, a manager of emerging technology, who had detailed his efforts to get the drug. Dr. Bright replied to all.

“Amazing work and great teamwork!” Dr. Bright said. “Joe = Awesome Chloroquine King!”

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After [Bayer](#) AG announced the [donation of millions of chloroquine pills](#) for the nation's Strategic National Stockpile, Dr. Bright engaged in a discussion about who would get credit, with suggestions of the Food and Drug Administration or assistant secretary for preparedness and response.

Dr. Bright said, "HHS win with various components acknowledged."

A lawyer for Dr. Bright said Wednesday her client at one time sought the drug, but only for clinical trials and not for the wide distribution envisioned by the White House. "He never thought it would be a win to flood the market," said the lawyer, Debra Katz. "That was a nightmare to Rick."

Last week, the Office of Special Counsel determined there were "reasonable grounds" to believe the ouster of Dr. Bright was retaliatory and recommended he remain in his job until an investigation is complete, his lawyers said. HHS is reviewing the determination.

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