

The Next Republican Culture War Attack: “Anti-White” COVID-19 Drug Guidance



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America’s hospitals are filled with unvaccinated COVID patients, many of whom have bought the dangerous narrative peddled by anti-vaxxers and Republican politicians who failed the nation when COVID first struck and continue to fail the nation today. To deflect from their failure, the newest Republican culture war attack, coming directly from former President Donald Trump and Fox News’ Tucker Carlson, accuses Democrats and the Administration of “anti-white racism” when it comes to the use of the limited supply of COVID-19 treatments. Make no mistake. Republicans are desperate to try to shift blame by creating a culture war where there is none. And they are trying to divide Americans even further, for their own benefit. Let’s examine the facts and address this attack head on.

The Facts: The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued guidelines for health care providers for the emergency use of the new COVID-19 treatment called Sotrovimab, which is in limited supply.

They note that the following factors place individuals at a higher risk of getting severe COVID:

- Older age (for example ≥ 65 years of age)
- Obesity or being overweight
- Pregnancy
- Chronic kidney disease
- Diabetes
- Immunosuppressive disease or immunosuppressive treatment
- Cardiovascular disease (including congenital heart disease) or hypertension
- Chronic lung diseases
- Sickle cell disease
- Neurodevelopmental disorders
- Having a medical-related technological dependence

And here's the part that includes the race language *as an addendum*:

"Other medical conditions or factors (for example, race or ethnicity) may also place individual patients at high risk for progression to severe COVID-19, and authorization of sotrovimab under the [Emergency Use Authorization] EUA is not limited to the medical conditions or factors listed above."

That's it. No mandate. No orders. That's the scary "anti-white" language that Republicans want us to run from. Below are the reasons why it's Republicans who should be on the defensive when it comes to COVID-19 treatments, not Democrats.

The Argument:

1. **Republicans are trying to shift blame** by creating a culture war issue. During some of the most dire times of the pandemic, when the country was counting on vaccines to curb the rapid spread of the virus, prominent Republicans cozied up with anti-vaccine conspiracy theorists and continuously elevated their lies by inviting them to testify in Congress and in statehouses. Well, as it turns out, many in their base listened to their advice. The *New York Times* studied every US county and found that both willingness to receive the COVID vaccine and actual vaccine rates were lower, on average, in counties where a majority of residents voted for Trump. Even though some have changed their tune since, the damage has already been done.

2. Unvaccinated Americans are behaving irresponsibly and putting our communities in danger.

At this point there is no excuse for not being vaccinated if you are eligible and don't have a condition that precludes you. Vaccine mandates exist for a reason, and they aren't new. The military administers 17 different vaccines to protect our troops, and states require kindergarteners to have certain vaccines before enrolling in public schools. So, who are these COVID antivaxxers? As of January 10, 2022, white people accounted for the largest share (65%) of people who are unvaccinated, meaning that they will still be the biggest cohort by race of those that will use this treatment. These reckless anti-vaxxers are forcing an undue burden and costs on the rest of us to pay. Taxpayers are footing the bill for COVID treatments, communities are forced to limit precious hospital space for loved ones who get sick, and an endless cycle of endangering the most vulnerable in order to support this white conservative entitlement that Republicans have wrought.

3. This culture war attack is meant to distract from the bigger picture. The reality is that this guidance, so far only on the books in one state, lists race as one of the many factors that might determine priority for this drug to account for Black, Latino, and Native American communities' disproportionate infection and death rates from COVID-19. But Republicans are cynically using this to distract from the fact that they spent months politicizing the pandemic, calling it a hoax, and are continuously undermining medical professionals. Donald Trump, Tucker Carlson, and other GOP leaders are claiming that anti-white racism is sweeping the nation because they know that they benefit when Americans are divided.

The bottom line: The best way to avoid needing this medication is to get vaccinated.

Republicans are begging for another culture war issue to throw at Democrats ahead of the midterms, and this is their just their latest attempt. Democrats shouldn't be afraid to call this issue what it is—a divisive distraction—and communicate to the American people that Republican leaders and the unvaccinated are the ones behaving irresponsibly and putting us all at risk.