

ADVERTISEMENT

SECTIONS

99¢ FOR 8 WEEKS  
Offer ends 2/8

LOG IN

CORONAVIRUS IN ILLINOIS UPDATES

FEEDBACK

As much as 9 inches of heavy, wet snow expected Monday



Dr. Anthony Fauci on what working for Donald Trump was really like



A 'healthy' doctor weeks after COVID-19 v

By JOHN KEILMAN  
CHICAGO TRIBUNE | DEC 15, 2020

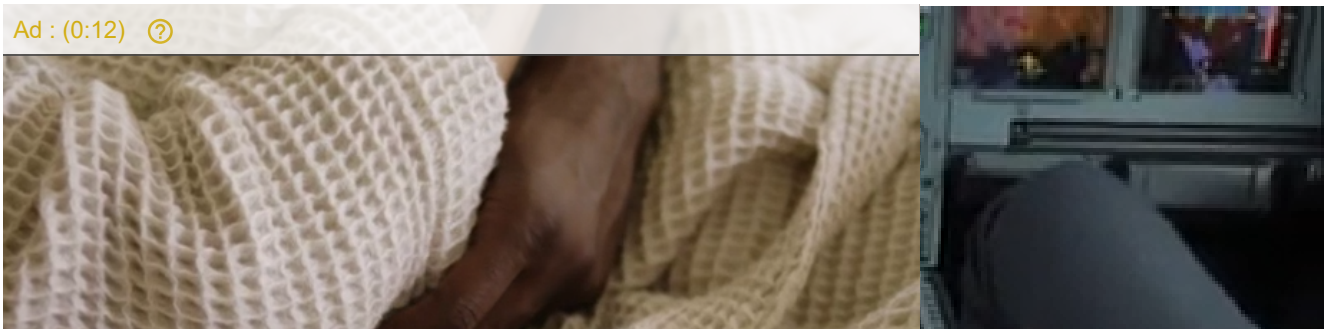


We have lifted the paywall on this story. To support essential reporting, please consider [becoming a subscriber](#).

CORONAVIRUS VIDEO UPDATES

Up Next - From plane to train: Pilots in Switzerland grounded by COVID are redeploying as train drivers

Ad : (0:12) ?





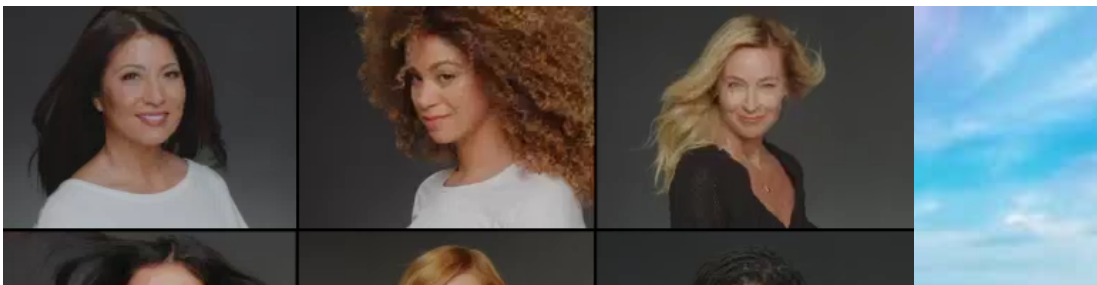
If you want an idea of the conspiracy theories that hang over COVID-19 vaccines, there’s no better summation than a 40-second TikTok video posted in October by a performer named Taylor Rousseau.

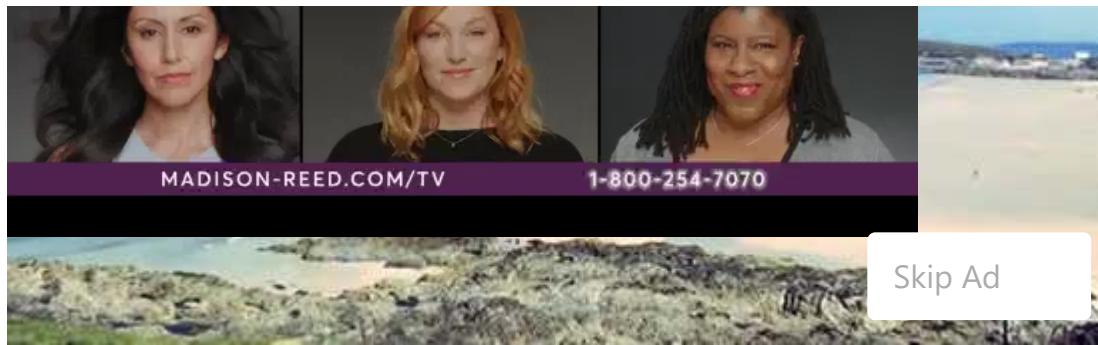
As a melodramatic song plays, Rousseau, young, blond and elaborately mascaraed, silently portrays a woman beaten to death for refusing to take a vaccine that contains a microchip carrying the mark of the beast. At the end, she enters a heavenly skyscape emblazoned with the words: “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

FEEDBACK

ADVERTISEMENT

Advertisement





The video, which only recently was taken down, was seen more than 680,000 times, garnered 47,000 likes and, despite thousands of mocking comments (“Ma’am, this is a CVS”), earned plenty of positive reviews.

“This is so incredibly powerful,” one viewer wrote.

**FEEDBACK**

Therein lies a challenge for public health officials trying to convince a wary portion of the public that the COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. Phony assertions have circulated for months on social media, joining a current of anti-vaccine sentiment that has grown **stronger** over the last 20 years.



FEEDBACK

A vial of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is drawn into a syringe Dec. 14, 2020, at the University of Iowa Stead Family Children's Hospital in Iowa City, Iowa. (Joseph Cress/Iowa City Press-Citizen)

A [poll](#) released last week showed that only 47% of Americans plan to get the vaccine. Those who didn't want it mostly said they were concerned about side effects and the development and approval process, though the poll didn't ask about many widely circulating myths.

Advertisement

Thumbtack  
Do  
GET IT ON Google Play | Download on the App Store

Find local pros for pretty much anything

Glossy Walls Paint Co. 4.5 stars 13 reviews

12 years 100 likes 1,000+ installations

Popular on Thumbtack

Skip Ad

Zizi Papacharissi, a communication and political science professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago, said social media has made it easy to amplify vaccine fabrications. Though companies like Facebook and YouTube have pledged to suppress such misinformation, she said that happens only after it has already spread.

“Any action they take is retroactive,” she said. “... Putting something over it that says, ‘This is possibly misinformation,’ or taking the post down, it’s not really going to help. In fact, it might do the opposite. It might attract even more attention.”

As the rollout begins, here are common myths about COVID-19 vaccines and what experts have to say about them:

**FEEDBACK****Myth #1: The vaccine contains a microchip**

The fear of being tracked via surreptitiously implanted microchips has existed for years, but some researchers [say](#) it became linked to COVID-19 vaccines by InfoWars, a conspiracy theory website from Alex Jones.

The idea is that the chips will allow the government and corporations to surveil people who get the vaccine. Microsoft founder Bill Gates and cell towers using 5G technology are also allegedly involved.

Thomas Hope, professor of cell and developmental biology at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine and a COVID-19 vaccine researcher, said that technology does not exist. And even if it did, he said, the microchips would have to find their way into multiple vaccines created by different companies.

“If someone (advancing this theory) has a phone in their hand, I would say you’re being tracked right now,” he said. “Why would someone else have to do it?”

## Myth #2: The vaccine will alter your DNA

A video that misrepresents remarks Gates made about COVID-19 vaccines has convinced some they can change DNA, the molecule that contains a person's genetic code.

The video appears to confuse DNA with messenger RNA, which is used by the new vaccines to direct cells to create components of the coronavirus, though not the entire thing. Immune cells detect those components and create antibodies that ward off the actual coronavirus should a person be exposed.

Hope said DNA and messenger RNA are entirely different molecules.

ADVERTISEMENT

FEEDBACK

“There's no DNA with (the) vaccines, so there's no possibility it could alter your DNA,” he said.

## Myth #3: The vaccine will give you COVID-19

This belief appears to stem from the fact that [some vaccines](#), such as those for measles, mumps and chickenpox, do indeed use live but weakened viruses to stimulate an immune response. Flu shots do the same thing with dead influenza viruses.

The messenger RNA vaccines don't use the coronavirus, live or dead, and thus are incapable of infecting someone with COVID-19, said University of Chicago

Medicine infectious diseases expert Dr. Emily Landon.

“These don’t have anything to do with the virus,” she said. “... There’s no virus involved in the process of doing this at all, which is why it can be made so much faster (than traditional vaccines).”

Some who received the Pfizer vaccine have reported fleeting **side effects** reminiscent of COVID-19, including fever, chills and fatigue. But Dr. Robert Citronberg executive medical director of infectious disease and prevention for Advocate Aurora Health, said they are just a sign that the immune system is kicking into gear.

“These minor side effects are exactly what we want,” he said.

## **Myth #4: Our immune systems are better than vaccines**

### FEEDBACK

A popular social media **claim**, circulated by Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., and others, says the vaccines are inferior to people’s immune systems in protecting against COVID-19.

This belief conflates two numbers: the survival rate of those who contract the virus, which is about 99%, and the roughly 95% efficacy rate of the vaccines under consideration in the U.S.

Asked about the claim, Citronberg responded: “Those comments are from people who are not really good at math or biostatistics.”

He said the survival rate still means hundreds of thousands will die from the disease. The vaccines’ high efficacy rate, much higher than that of flu shots, could swiftly bring about herd immunity that would prevent people from encountering the virus at all, Citronberg said.

And even though COVID-19 spares the vast majority of people it infects, he said, tens of thousands of people will suffer aftereffects for a long time.



“Even if you don’t die from it, you may have to live with it, which can be disabling,” Citronberg said. “I think people don’t understand that either.”

While this sort of pushback against vaccine myths is happening in many quarters, Papacharissi said it might not be enough to counteract the conspiracy theories. Subscribing to falsehoods has become a form of identity, she said, a way people can reflect the mistrust they feel toward the government and media.

“Until we repair that relationship of trust, we’re going to have problems sharing the truth,” she said.

*jkeilman@chicagotribune.com*

ADVERTISEMENT

FEEDBACK

*Twitter @JohnKeilman*

ADVERTISEMENT



*This story has been revised to correctly identify Dr. Robert Citronberg and Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky.*

John Keilman



John Keilman is a general assignment reporter for the Chicago Tribune, based in the suburbs. He writes about sports, education, health, drug abuse and many other subjects. Before joining the Tribune in 2001, he worked as a reporter in Virginia, Maryland and Ohio. Tips about strange occurrences, public outrages and inspiring people always welcome.

## These Cars Are So Loaded It's Hard to Believe They're So Cheap

FEEDBACK

LUXURY SUVS | SEARCH ADS | SPONSORED

## Amazon CEO Dumps His Own Stock to Buy This New Technology

THE MOTLEY FOOL | SPONSORED

## Forget Expensive Roofing (Do This Instead)

INSIDER FINANCIAL TIPS | SPONSORED

6 Credit Cards You Should Not Ignore If You Have Excellent Credit

Getting this Treasure is impossible! Prove us wrong

NERD WAREHOUSE | SPONSORED

CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Column: Behind Gov. Pritzker's exaggeration is this truth: The pandemic is bringing out the best in most of us

CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Bail denied for suspect who lost shoe while fleeing fatal shooting of retired Chicago firefighter Dwain Williams in botched carjacking

By ROSEMARY SOBOL

SUN SENTINEL

# A 'healthy' doctor died two weeks after getting a COVID-19 vaccine

## Top 6 Cards If You Have Excellent Credit

NERDWALLET | SPONSORED

## Challenge Your Brain With The Best Strategy Game. No install.

FORGE OF EMPIRES - FREE ONLINE GAME | SPONSORED



Therese Raphael column: Vaccine side effects are the next big challenge



Chicago cop charged in gambling scheme ordered jailed after he allegedly attacked girlfriend  
By ~~JASON~~ ~~SE~~ ~~RA~~ ~~PH~~ ~~EL~~, BLOOMBERG OPINION

FEEDBACK

### You May Like

Sponsored Links by Taboola

### Arizona Launches New Policy for Cars Used Less Than 50 Miles per Day

My Insurance Savings

### Shop Now - \$8.99

Newegg

### New Program May Pay Off Your Home If You Live In Or Close To Tempe

HarpReplacement

### These Twins Were Named "Most Beautiful In The World," Wait Until You See Them Today

Post Fun

ADVERTISEMENT

CONNECT



TRIBUNE PUBLISHING

New York Daily News

Orlando Sentinel

The Morning Call of Pa.

Daily Press of Va.

The Daily Meal

The Baltimore Sun

Sun Sentinel of Fla.

Hartford Courant

The Virginian-Pilot

Studio 1847

FEEDBACK

COMPANY INFO

Careers

Privacy Policy

Archives

Coupons

Manage Web Notifications

Chicago Tribune Store

About us

Terms of Service

Contact us

Local print ads

FAQ

Media kit

Copyright © 2021, Chicago Tribune