

INSTITUTE FOR PREVENTIVE HEALTHCARE & ADVOCACY



Kathey Avery, RN, BSN, CN

Avery Health - Education and Consulting brings extensive experience and knowledge to help individuals and groups achieve positive health outcomes and implement equity.

Kathey Avery, founder and owner of Avery Health - Education and Consulting, has more than 35 years of experience in healthcare and community activism. She is dedicated to raising awareness about, and helping in the prevention of, chronic diseases and preventable cancers through patient and public education and personal accountability.

Contact Kathey Avery today at 828-768-2369 to schedule a talk or workshop. For more details, please visit www.AveryHEC.com

The Institute for Preventive Healthcare & Advocacy



Promoting optimum health for all residents of Buncombe County and surrounding areas by addressing the social determinants of health and the inequities in access to affordable and preventive healthcare.

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The Dangers of Viruses

BY KATHEY AVERY RN, BSN, CN

Understanding Viral Outbreaks and Prevention

What is a Virus?

According to the Cleveland Clinic, a virus is a microscopic, nonliving infectious agent that requires a living host cell to reproduce. It typically consists of genetic material (DNA or RNA) enclosed in a protective protein coat called a capsid, and sometimes an outer lipid membrane.

With the number of viruses affecting our world this year, I decided to use this month's article to help re-educate the community about viruses. I especially want to revisit information about the Ebola virus. During the first outbreak, I remember how some people said President Obama was "doing too much" or overreacting. At IFPHA, our mission is preventive healthcare. Preventing viral epidemics and unnecessary deaths is central to that mission.

During the 2014 Ebola outbreak, President Obama's administration led a massive global and domestic response. The strategy focused on containing the outbreak at its source in West Africa, using military logistics, and strengthening US screening and treatment systems to prevent widespread domestic transmission.

For more information and full documentation of the US response, you can review the Obama White House Ebola Archives (obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/ebola-response).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, President Trump's handling of the crisis drew both criticism and praise: criticism from those

who felt the response was not swift enough, and praise for the rapid development of the Covid-19 vaccine. Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett and her team at the NIH's Vaccine Research Center laid the scientific foundation for the mRNA-1273 vaccine, building on years of coronavirus research to enable an early and effective response. *Source: Service to American Medals*

Covid-19 caused a level of disruption in the United States unmatched by any epidemic in recent history. Many observers contrasted Trump's response with Obama's approach to Ebola. In 2014, Obama deployed military personnel and medical teams to West Africa to build treatment centers and support containment efforts. Bina Venkataraman, former chief policy advisor to the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology, noted a "stark contrast" between the two administrations' responses.

In my nursing opinion, "when health is an issue in America or globally, lay people should not lead but learn." Citizens without scientific or healthcare training, relying on what they learned and forgot in high school, cannot lead a pandemic response. Containing a dangerous virus requires a coordinated, science-driven effort. Healthcare and scientific professionals must have an outbreak plan that everyone follows to prevent unnecessary deaths.

I disliked wearing masks and "gowning



I protected myself and others by wearing a mask and other protective gear during the Covid-19 pandemic.

up" when I worked at Mission Hospital, but I understood it was necessary to protect myself and others. During Covid-19, the public was allowed to weigh-in on mask-wearing in ways that made no scientific sense. Political leaders often made decisions based on those complaints.

What Healthcare Workers Have Always Known

Respiratory isolation prevents the spread of airborne or droplet-borne illnesses such as Covid-19, tuberculosis, and measles. Patients are placed in private rooms with negative air pressure, which pulls fresh air in and filters contaminated air out, and strict CDC guidelines are followed.

Historically, mask-wearing became normalized during the 1918 Influenza pandemic. The Spanish Flu forced a cultural shift: doctors, nurses, and sometimes entire cities were required to wear gauze masks. Double-thickness gauze masks reduced infection rates among hospital attendants, and by the mid-1920s, masks had become standard in operating rooms.

Hantavirus Infection

America's latest viral outbreak.

According to the CDC, hantaviruses are primarily transmitted to humans through contact with infected wild rodents. While rodents do not become ill, humans can develop severe and potentially fatal diseases such as Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS) or Hemorrhagic Fever with Renal Syndrome (HFRS).

The risk of hantavirus infection in North Carolina remains extremely low. Most US cases occur in the Southwest and involve a different hantavirus strain than the one associated with the outbreak on the M/V Hondius.

One North Carolina resident was aboard the M/V Hondius. They were evacuated with other US passengers to the University of Nebraska Medical Center's National Quarantine Unit and were reported to be healthy as of May 12, 2026.

All passengers from the M/V Hondius are being monitored for 42 days after their last possible exposure. The incubation period



Hantavirus infections are rare in NC.

for the Andes virus is typically around two weeks but can range from 7 days to 6 weeks.

Testing for hantavirus should only be performed in individuals who have both clinically compatible illness and epidemiologic risk factors, such as rodent exposure or travel to a hantavirus-endemic region.

If you suspect that you, or someone you know, may have been exposed to hantavirus, contact your local health department or the NC Communicable Disease Branch at (919) 733-3419.

Lunch & Learn



Join Kathey Avery on the third and fourth

Wednesdays of the month from 12-1 p.m. at the Linwood Crump Shiloh Community Center, 121 Shiloh Road in Asheville. The community nurse will address "Hot Topics" and provide education and knowledge to help keep you healthy. All are welcome!