



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on March 20, 2025

HHS Continuing mRNA Research Funding

Recent developments within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) have sparked debate over mRNA vaccine research. After the agency under the helm of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. canceled grants for vaccine hesitancy studies, many in the Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) movement hoped funding cuts for mRNA research would follow. But HHS has confirmed no such cuts are happening.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH), an HHS agency focused on biomedical research, continues to fund at least 130 studies on mRNA technology. That covers flu, HIV, cancer, and other conditions.



AP Images
Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

Scrubbing Mentions of mRNA From Grants

Speculation surged after reports claimed NIH officials told scientists to remove mRNA references from grant applications. Some saw it as a signal that the government planned to cut funding.

[KFF Health News](#) broke the story. According to its report, scientists funded by the NIH were told to “scrub” references to mRNA vaccine technology from their applications.

An NIH project officer “flagged” a pending grant for mentioning mRNA, according to an email reviewed by KFF. A researcher at a Philadelphia biomedical center wrote, “It’s still unclear whether mRNA vaccine grants will be canceled.”

Meanwhile, NIH officials instructed a senior New York scientist, who had cited mRNA vaccine efficacy in past applications, to remove all mentions of mRNA from future proposals.

KFF also said that an official at the National Cancer Institute (NCI) confirmed that NIH acting Director Matthew Memoli sent an institute-wide email instructing the staff that

any grants, contracts, or collaborations involving mRNA vaccines be reported up the chain to Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.’s office and the White House.

This follows NIH’s decision to [cancel vaccine hesitancy studies](#). “It is reasonable to assume mRNA vaccine work is next,” one NIH official told the outlet.

Media Panics

In the wake of these revelations, mainstream media outlets erupted in outrage — but for reasons that miss the mark entirely. Instead of addressing the risks of mRNA technology, they framed the issue as an attack on science launched by the new administration.



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[Scientific American](#) declared in alarm, “Lifesaving mRNA Vaccine Technology Appears Targeted under Trump and RFK Jr.” Meanwhile, the [World Socialist Web Site](#) decried a supposed ideological purge with the headline, “NIH Crackdown on mRNA Research: The Trump Administration’s March Toward Scientific Censorship.” [Bloomberg](#), in turn, lamented the supposed triumph of misinformation, warning, “The Anti-Vax Culture War on mRNA Just Got Worse.”

These narratives ignore the growing evidence of mRNA’s safety risks. There was also no mention of the strong biotech ties within the Trump administration (cue [J.D. Vance](#) and Kennedy’s own deputy [Jim O’Neill](#)) that make meaningful policy shifts unlikely.

HHS Responds

HHS moved quickly to shut down speculation, disappointing many in the MAHA movement.

Children’s Health Defense (CHD), a nonprofit founded by Kennedy, [reported](#): “No mRNA Vaccine Funding Has Been Canceled,” quoting HHS Deputy Press Secretary Emily G. Hilliard.

The NIH bills itself as “the largest public funder of biomedical research in the world.”

The CHD report says,

According to KFF Health News, the NIH is funding at least 130 studies involving mRNA technology, examining treatments for conditions and diseases including flu, AIDS and cancer. A March 8 KFF Health News report said [clinical trials studying mRNA vaccines](#) for melanoma and Zika are also in progress.

Fundings

The NIH does not always disclose specific financial details of its grants. They vary widely in size, with some exceeding \$500,000 in direct costs annually — covering salaries, lab equipment, and materials.

For example, the [RNA Modifications Driving Oncogenesis \(RNAMoDO\) Initiative](#) is set to receive \$4.9 million annually for five years, totaling \$24.5 million. It expects to grant five awards, each with a maximum of \$650,000 per year in direct costs.

Similarly, [NIH’s Research Area 001](#), which funds therapeutics, vaccines, and diagnostics for antimicrobial-resistant pathogens, is budgeted for one to two contracts, with up to \$8.5 million in initial funding.

As another example, in the final days of the Biden administration, [HHS awarded](#) Moderna a \$590 million grant to accelerate the development of mRNA-based pandemic influenza vaccines, including those targeting avian flu strains. The specific duration of this grant remains undisclosed, but it is likely a multiyear project.

And it’s not just NIH that funds such projects. Notably, the \$4.7 billion “[Project NextGen](#)” initiative, designed to develop next-generation Covid vaccines, [remains intact](#). It is run by HHS’s Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA).

Certainly, without specific financial data for each project, providing an accurate total estimate of all mRNA studies is challenging. Yet it is clear that the collective investment is more than substantial.



mRNA Under Scrutiny

Following the [disastrous aftermath](#) of the mRNA-based Covid vaccine rollout, the platform has faced increasing calls for its development to be halted entirely.

The CHD report features medical professionals calling for an end to mRNA research. Epidemiologist Nicolas Hulscher condemned the platform as a failure that caused catastrophic harm, and urged policymakers to halt further development.

Internal medicine physician Dr. Clayton J. Baker criticized the billions in taxpayer funding spent on mRNA vaccines, arguing they provided little return. “What have taxpayers got in return? Two ineffective COVID products with the most VAERS-reported deaths and injuries in history,” he said. He warned that mRNA has multiple mechanisms of harm, and called for the government to stop funding its research.

Dr. Vinay Prasad, a professor of epidemiology and biostatistics at the University of California, San Francisco, [outlined five reasons](#) why mRNA vaccine research should be “deprioritized.” He points out to viable non-mRNA alternatives, unknown long-term safety risks, and a damaged public reputation.

Psychotherapist Dr. Joseph Sansone, leading a legal effort to ban mRNA vaccines in Florida, called for an immediate halt to funding.

“All funding for mRNA should stop immediately,” he said, arguing that Kennedy has the power to prohibit mRNA injections and “end the COVID emergency in the same manner that a president can immediately undo a prior president’s executive orders.”

Kennedy’s Inaction

Kennedy’s failure to act on mRNA-based Covid vaccines has frustrated the MAHA movement, which played an instrumental role in shaping the last election’s outcome.

Despite having the authority to amend or revoke the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness (PREP) Act, which shields vaccine manufacturers from liability [until December 31, 2029](#), he has taken no action.

Additionally, certain COVID vaccines, including booster and pediatric doses, are still under emergency use authorization (EUA). Under [Section 564](#) of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, Kennedy could revoke these EUAs.

State Efforts

Kennedy’s past priorities and campaign rhetoric are quickly becoming history. The man who once railed against corporate capture and Big Pharma now oversees the very apparatus he once vowed to overhaul — and so far is preserving the status quo.

The Constitution never envisioned HHS, yet it has grown into a bureaucratic behemoth with unchecked authority over public health. It dictates medical policy, shields pharmaceutical giants from liability, and burns through over [\\$1 trillion](#) annually.

[Luckily, some states are pushing back.](#) Florida took the lead, with Surgeon General Joseph Ladapo calling for a halt to Covid mRNA vaccinations. Lawmakers in Idaho, Montana, and Kentucky have introduced bills to ban mRNA vaccines or penalize doctors who administer them. Tennessee and North



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Dakota are considering restrictions on state funding for mRNA-based treatments. Others push for labeling laws to warn consumers of potential risks.

No full bans have taken effect yet, but resistance is growing. While Washington refuses to act, states are proving they still have a say in the fight against federal overreach.

Related:

[RFK, Jr.'s Covid Optics: One Trial Paused, Vaccine Agenda Advancing](#)

[RFK Jr. Calling for MMR Vaccinations. What About His Past Safety Warnings?](#)

[RFK, Jr. Downplays VAERS After Years of Citing It](#)

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