

HEADLINE: US vaccine lotteries a 'stain' amid global need for COVID-19 vaccine, says Dr. Vin Gupta

No longer having to fear infection and perhaps death from a viral disease should be a reward in of itself, but as many governors across the United States are realizing, that alone hasn't motivated many Americans to get the COVID-19 vaccine.

Stockpiles of ready-to-go shots and waning vaccination rates have led to several states instituting vaccine lotteries, with potential prizes including [joints in Washington](#), a \$1 million [cash prize in Ohio](#) and [guns or trucks in West Virginia](#).

These incentive-based programs have done their job by [increasing vaccination rates in several states](#), but Dr. Vin Gupta is one medical expert who believes these efforts are tone-deaf while much of the world remains desperate for additional doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

"It's a stain on us as a country that here we are, we have so many vaccines that we're auctioning it off in these lotteries," Gupta said. "Select states (need) to coax people to get vaccinated, when they've now had many weeks and many months to potentially get a vaccine. We're letting that happen."

North America as a whole is [outpacing the rest of the world's vaccination rates](#) by a large amount. 64 people per 100 have received a COVID-19 vaccine dose in North America, compared to just 32 people per 100 in South America and 2.9 per 100 in Africa.

United States President Joe Biden has announced plans to [donate 80 million vaccine doses](#) by the end of June, but that will only be a drop of water in the global bucket. Even some of the country's closest military allies are yet to receive much vaccine assistance from the United States, with 0.1% of Nigerians, 3.9% of Japanese and 4.5% of South Koreans being fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

"If only for the for the national security interest of the United States, it would make sense for our country to invest and pursue policies that ensure that the rest of the world gets vaccinated as quickly as possible," Gupta said. "Then you mitigate against the rise of a dangerous variant that could put the world back to day zero, which would be catastrophic."

According to Gupta, how the world responds now could make a big difference for when the next pandemic rolls around. General knowledge of mask-wearing has increased, for example, but countries across the world may need serious financial investment to ensure a future pandemic doesn't cause even greater carnage than COVID-19.

"Bio-warfare pandemics are now one of the biggest threats to global security, and we have to put in more than we currently are investing, and we've invested a few billion dollars," Gupta said. "And yet, it takes \$17 billion just to build one battleship; it just doesn't make sense."

There's such a dyssynchrony between the magnitude of risk that the next pandemic poses to our way of life, and our investments to counter that."