

### **Health policy expert Dr. Vin Gupta calls on Biden to aid India's vaccine rollout**

While India struggles to vaccinate citizens during the nation's deadly COVID-19 surge, U.S. states are offering incentives to increase vaccine uptake. Health policy expert Dr. Vin Gupta said at a Monday press conference that these disparities are shameful.

"It's a stain on us as a country," Gupta said, referring to the lack of U.S. intervention.

Though it's assumed by experts to be much higher, India's official COVID-19 case count hit 27 million by the end of May, according to the New York Times. Only about 3 percent of its population of 1.3 billion have been fully vaccinated.

With millions of vaccines left unused and unwanted in the U.S., Gupta — who has become one of nation's most visible COVID-19 analysts — said the ethical course of action is lending our vaccine supply to nations like India hit hard by a second wave of the virus.

This past weekend, the Biden administration announced a plan to share at least 80 million U.S. vaccine doses globally by the end of June. While some celebrated the news, others like Gupta were left scratching their heads.

With a humanitarian crisis unfolding in India, the second most populous nation in the world, Gupta said 80 million doses distributed worldwide simply isn't enough.

"We need a vastly different scale on a timeline that's much more accelerated," he said.

In May, Dr. Monica Gandhi, infectious disease doctor from the University of California, San Francisco, co-authored a letter with two dozen colleagues calling on the Biden administration to ship excess vaccine doses to India.

"There is a very clear, not that expensive and obvious way to help the rest of the world end the pandemic, which is to help them get vaccines," Gandhi said.

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Some politicians have pushed back on these requests, arguing that the government should turn towards vaccinating American children first.

Gandhi, however, emphasized that since they are at such a low risk of severe infection, American children “can wait a few months” while at-risk populations in other countries receive their doses.

“If health care workers in other countries die because they don’t have access to the vaccine, the lack of health care workers in other settings will put back health metrics on other diseases, meaning health systems can be profoundly destabilized,” she said.

To Gupta, the lack of urgency in supporting India’s vaccination efforts asserts the position that Americans believe they’re entitled to “prolonged access to the vaccine while other people are dying.”

The Harvard-trained pulmonologist has spent the duration of the pandemic advising the American people how to reduce their risk of transmission. Now he calls on the government to prevent the rise of a dangerous variant that he says would put the global health crisis back at “day zero.”

To prevent this catastrophe, he said the Biden administration must support global vaccination efforts and do so with urgency.

“The obligation of the United States is to do everything in its power to vaccinate the rest of the world,” Gupta said.