

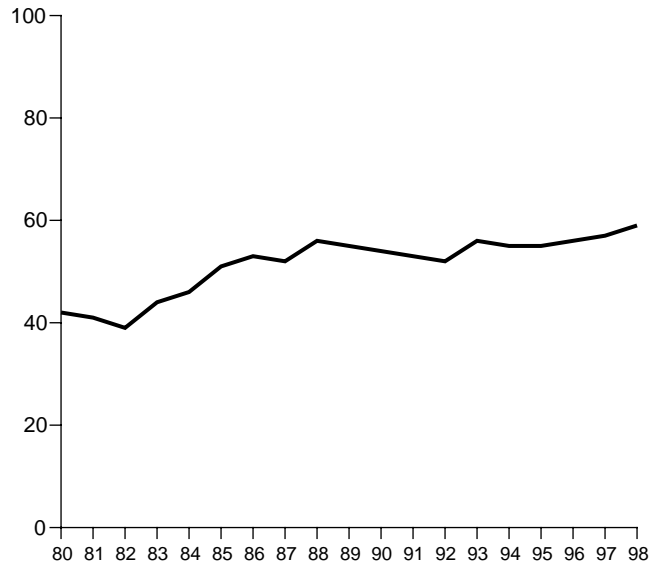


From two dozen flu vaccine manufacturers 30 years ago, one, French (!) supplier now stands between the United States and a killer flu epidemic. The nation is also short of DTAP vaccines (diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis or whooping cough, being given to a National Guardsman here); and those for adenovirus now epidemic at military bases; as well as chicken pox, MMR, pneumococcal disease, and others.

and childhood asthma, besides the millions of cases of non-managed conditions such as diabetes, due to lack of insurance and access to medical care. These add to, and interact with, the expected disease rates connected with the population's age profile and associated disease likelihood. And due to lack of public transportation, the United States has a relatively

FIGURE 1
U.S. Death Rate Rising From Infectious Disease (Excluding AIDS/HIV), 1980-98

(Crude Death Rate Per 100,000)



Source: In *Microbial Threats to Health; Emergence, Detection and Response* (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Medicine, March 2003), reprinted with permission from Pinner, R.W., Roy, K., Shoemake, H., "Mortality from Infectious Diseases in United States, 1993-1998" (unpublished manuscript, 2002).

high rate of impairment, besides mortality, from vehicular accidents.

Figure 1 shows a fundamental marker of ill health in the United States—the rising rate of death from infectious dis-

Chiron's Vaccine Plant: Blair's Sweetheart Deal?

An emerging scandal surrounds the Administration's approval for half of all the United States' 2004/2005 flu vaccine to come from a known risky plant in Britain. Particularly under scrutiny is the involvement of Lord Paul Rudd Drayson, top moneybags to Prime Minister Tony Blair and the Labour Party.

The record, from press and corporate accounts: In June 2003, a U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) delegation visited the vaccine-making facility in Speke, Liverpool, for a sanitation inspection; the FDA then gave approval to California-based Chiron Corp. for a mega-order for the 2004/2005 U.S. flu season, to be produced at the Liverpool plant despite its record of contamination problems, and frequent changes of owner-

ship in the past, with attendant under-investment in upkeep.

At the time of the FDA 2003 visit, Chiron did not even own the plant! The then-owner, Lord Drayson, is notorious for having made a windfall of £32 million from the Blair government granting PowderJect a mega-contract for smallpox vaccine supplies, soon after a secret meeting at Downing Street in December 2001. Blair's Health Minister Lord Hunt misled Parliament to think this was the only means to vaccinate. (During this same period, 2001-2002, Vice President Dick Cheney's top staffer I. Lewis Libby, was nicknamed "Germ-Boy" at the White House, for insisting on universal smallpox inoculation.) In an earlier episode, Drayson was faulted by the National Audit Office for donating £50,000 to the Labour Party, during the time the Blair government was awarding a TB vaccine contract; it went to PowderJect. In late Spring 2004, Drayson gave a whopping £505,000 to the Labour Party.