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At a Glance

- Secretary Kennedy fires two top leaders of the USPSTF.
- HHS re-established ACIP’s charter after withdrawing an April revision.
- FDA leadership turnover continues across the agency's drug and vaccine centers.
- SAVRR council to convene in June on fall respiratory vaccine recommendations.
- Seasonal COVID-19 vaccine shows 50% effectiveness in reducing illness.
- Measles continues to spread across U.S. as cases surpass 2,000.

Detailed Brief

Secretary Kennedy fires two top leaders of the USPSTF.

- The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. fired the two top leaders of the US Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF), John Wong, MD, and Esa Davis, MD, MPH, effective May 11, according to letters obtained by [The New York Times](#).
 - The task force is an independent, volunteer panel that reviews scientific evidence to make recommendations for preventative services, including cancer and mental health screenings, with guidelines ensuring free access to these vital screenings.
 - These dismissals leave the panel with 8 sitting members out of a full roster of 16 after 5 other members saw their terms expire at the beginning of the year.
 - [Nominations](#) for the open positions are due May 23.
- In the termination letters, Kennedy noted that the terminations were administrative in nature rather than performance based, citing HHS’s responsibility to “protect the integrity of the Task Force’s work.”
- This decision has drawn sharp criticism from associations, including the [American Medical Association](#), citing concerns about transparency in member selection and interference with patient care.

HHS re-established ACIP's charter after withdrawing an April revision.

- HHS [published](#) a Federal Register notice on May 19 that formally re-established the charter for the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) after withdrawing the revised charter it issued in April due to what the agency described as an “administrative error.”
 - The April charter revisions would have [substantially expanded](#) ACIP's scope and broadened the qualifications for potential committee members beyond traditional vaccine, immunization, and public health expertise.
- Importantly, while the May 19 notice withdraws the amended charter from April, it does not clarify whether HHS intends to reissue the same revised language or pursue additional changes moving forward.

FDA leadership turnover continues across the agency's drug and vaccine centers.

- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is facing continued leadership turnover following [the resignation](#) of former Commissioner Martin Makary, MD, MPH.
- The Acting Director of the agency's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER), Tracy Beth Høeg, MD, PhD, was [fired](#) on May 15 and was replaced by Michael Davis, MD, PhD (previously CDER Deputy Director).
 - Høeg led CDER since Dec. 2025 and co-wrote the [assessment](#) used to justify the Jan. 2026 changes to the CDC-recommended childhood immunization schedule.
- Katherine Szarama, PhD, Acting Director of the agency's Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research (CBER), [also left](#) her position; she is expected to retain a role within the agency.
 - Szarama served [in the role](#) since May 1 and was replaced by FDA Advisor Karim Mikhail, a former pharmaceutical executive, who joined the FDA as a Senior Advisor last year.
- Other recent FDA departures include Chief AI Officer Jeremy Walsh, Deputy Chief of Staff Sam Doran, and Adam Sherwat, MD, Director of CDER's Office of Infectious Diseases.
- In addition to the FDA, the CDC and Office of the Surgeon General are also under temporary oversight. On May 19, Secretary Kennedy tapped [Stephanie Haridopolos](#), MD, to act as temporary Surgeon General.

SAVRR council to convene in June on fall respiratory vaccine recommendations.

- The National Adult and Influenza Immunization [Summit Adult Vaccine Recommendations Review](#) (SAVRR) Council is scheduled to meet June 9 to discuss implementation of fall respiratory season vaccine recommendations.
 - The council [is expected](#) to finalize provider-focused recommendations ahead of the 2026-2027 respiratory virus season for COVID-19, influenza, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccines.
 - SAVRR is a coalition of clinicians, pharmacists, immunization experts, and healthcare leaders that was established to help improve coordination and consistency around immunization recommendations.

Seasonal COVID-19 vaccine shows 50% effectiveness in reducing illness.

- [An interim report](#) found that the 2025/2026 seasonal COVID-19 vaccine demonstrated a roughly 50% reduction in illness risk up to nine weeks post-vaccination.
- This effectiveness was observed prominently among older Canadian adults.
- The study used a test-negative design to account for potential confounders and ensure accurate vaccine effectiveness estimates.

Measles continues to spread across U.S. as cases surpass 2,000.

- As of May 15, the U.S. has reported [2,006](#) measles cases in 2026—an increase of 39 cases in the last week. The U.S. recorded 2,214 cases in all of 2025, a year that broke a three-decade record.
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