

EX-NIH Director Speaks Out on What the Government Got Wrong About the Pandemic

Former National Institutes of Health director Dr. Francis Collins was at the center of the nation's COVID-19 response. His agency helped fund the research that led to the vaccine rollout and he personally grappled with controversy, consternation and difficult decisions surrounding the reaction to it all.

Collins, a self-described evangelical Christian, discussed these elements in an interview with Faithwire and revealed an area in which he feels officials and scientists failed: communicating about the ebbs and flows of the pandemic.

"We probably didn't do a good enough job early on saying on, 'Here's the best recommendations we've got from what we know right now, but they might change because we're learning about this virus day after day,'" Collins said. "And then recommendations did have to change as we learned more, and then the virus changed, and we had to change the recommendations again."

He continued, "People looked at that like, 'These scientists don't know what they're doing; they're jerking us around.' No, we were trying to give the best information at that moment. But I don't think that was explained very well."

It's no secret that frustrations have abounded over the government's and media's shifting tones and proclamations on masks, the vaccines and other elements of the COVID-19 response.

And while not everyone will agree with Collins' views, handling of the pandemic or his general statements, his

admission that pandemic communications were potentially insufficient is notable.

Collins on the 'Hardest Part' of Navigating COVID-19

The scientist also revealed that navigating the reaction to COVID-19 vaccines was the most challenging part of the overarching ordeal. He called the vaccines an “answer to prayer” and expressed dismay at the hesitancy many have had to get jabbed.

“I have to say the hardest part was what happened with the vaccines which were produced by the scientific effort in remarkable speed and with remarkable safety and efficacy,” he said. “I will tell you, when I saw that data in November of 2020 when the trials were completed, it was overwhelmingly wonderful. It was an answer to prayer.”

Collins said the research brought him to “tears.” He felt convinced at that moment that the country would be able to “vanquish this terrible virus.” Flash forward more than a year and COVID-19 is still with us.

“But it didn’t happen partly because of new variants, but in a large part because of people who were simply not interested in getting vaccinated, many of whom were in the church,” he said. “Thirty to 40% of white evangelicals are still resistant to vaccination despite the fact that more than 100,000 people have died unnecessarily because of rejecting this way that they could have saved their lives.”

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