Share Your News Now

If you would like to share news or information with our readers, please send the unique stories, business news organization events, and school news to us includinig your name and phone number in case more information is needed.

For news and information consideration, please send to News@scdaily.com or contact
John Robbins 281-965-6390
Jun Gai 281-498-4310

Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

Southern Daily News is published by Southern News Group Daily

Publisher: Wea H. Lee
President: Catherine Lee
Editor: John Robbins

Address: 11122 Bellaire Blvd., Houston, TX 77072
E-mail: News@scdaily.com

Inside C2

Tuesday, April 12 2022

Biden cracks down on 'ghost guns' with new rule to tackle gun violence

WASHINGTON, April 11 (Reuters) - President Joe Biden unveiled a new rule to rein in so-called ghost guns and ban the manufacturing of the untraceable firearms on Monday as the administration faces growing pressure to crack down on gun deaths and violent crime in the United States.

Ghost guns are privately made firearms that are not marked with a serial number and are difficult for law enforcement to trace when used to commit a crime.

The Department of Justice's final rule has been making its way through the federal regulation process for nearly a year and is likely to draw opposition and litigation from gun advocates in the coming weeks.

"These guns are weapons of choice for many criminals," Biden said during an event in the White House Rose Garden. "We're going to do everything we can to deprive them of that choice."

The rule would make it illegal for businesses to manufacture such kits without a serial number and for a licensed gun dealer to sell them without a background check, Biden said.

The rule is part of a series of measures announced by Biden and the Justice Department in April last year to tackle growing gun violence in the United States and curb mass shootings.

In 2021, there were about 20,000 suspected ghost guns reported to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) as having been recovered by law enforcement in criminal investigations – a tenfold increase from 2016, according to statistics shared by the White House.

The Justice Department rule bans unserialized "buy build shoot" kits that individuals can buy online or at a store without a background check and can readily assemble into a working firearm in as little as 30 minutes with equipment they have at home. It also turns some ghost guns already in circulation into serialized firearms.

Gun deaths increased in 2021 over 2020, according to the nonprofit Gun Violence Archive.

In 2021 there were 20,726 gun deaths in the United States, not counting suicides by gun, the group reported. This included 693 mass shootings, defined by four or more people being shot, and claimed 702 lives and injured more than 2,800 people, the group reported.

Biden also nominated Steve Dettelbach, a former U.S. attorney from Ohio, to run ATF.

Ukraine expects Russian assault soon in east

LVIV, Ukraine, April 11 (Reuters) - Ukraine said on Monday it expected Russia to launch a huge new offensive soon, as Moscow shifts its focus to seizing territory in the east after its invasion force was driven from the gates of Kyiv this month.

The first EU leader to meet Vladimir Putin face-to-face since the war began, Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer, gave a grim account of his talks with the Russian leader, held at a residence outside Moscow.

"I generally have no optimistic impression that I can report to you from this conversation with President Putin," he said. "The offensive (in eastern Ukraine) is evidently being prepared on a massive scale."

After withdrawing forces from northern Ukraine, including suburbs of Kyiv lain to waste under its occupation, Russia now says its main objective is eastern Ukraine. It is demanding Kyiv cede control of swathes of territory there, known as the Donbas, to separatist fighters. Kyiv says it is girding for a new battle.

"We forecast that active combat will begin in these areas in the nearest time," Ukraine's defence ministry spokesman Oleksandr Motuzyanyk said.

A U.S. official said Washington believed Russia was trying to reinforce and resupply its troops in the Donbas.

The biggest prize Russia aims to capture in the Donbas is Mariupol, the main eastern port, where thousands of people are believed to have died under a near-seven week siege. If Russia finally captures it, it could better link troops advancing from the east with those from Crimea, and shift their focus to a new attempt to encircle the main Ukrainian force in the east.
In his latest plea for international support, President Volodymyr Zelenskiy told South Korea's parliament there were tens of thousands of dead in Mariupol, a figure that has not been confirmed independently. "But even despite this, the Russians are not stopping their offensive", he said.

WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

04/11/2022

Wea H. Lee
Wealee@scdaily.com
Chairman of International District Houston Texas
Publisher Southern Daily Wea H. Lee
Southern News Group Chairman / CEO
Chairman of International Trade & Culture Center
Republic of Guiana Honorary consul at Houston Texas

We Are Very Proud Of This Group Of Chinese Americans Students

Thirteen high school students at Bellaire High School were named Valedictorians of their class with 5.0 GPA. Nine of them are Chinese students. We would like to express our sincere congratulations on their achievement.

Bellaire High School has been recognized as one of the best high schools in the greater Houston area. Over the past several years, the school has cultivated and produced countless outstanding young students. Many families have moved to the City of Bellaire because of the reputation of Bellaire High School.

For more than two years, because of the pandemic, most of the students have been taking their classes online. It is very special and noteworthy that this group of students could achieve such extraordinary results under the added pressures caused by today's challenging health situation.

Many Chinese immigrants have moved to America in recent years. No matter whether they came here as students or as legal immigrants, their first goal is to seek a better education for the next generation. They want their kids to go to better schools so they search for and select the best school districts they can find.

We are so grateful to learn that all these young students also have joined many social service groups to serve the community. We hope that they will not only strive to enrich their future excellence in their respective fields of study, but will also give honor and respect to their parents and contribute to society.

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

Editor's Choice

Scottie Scheffler of the U.S. celebrates on the 18th green after winning The Masters at Augusta National Golf Club, Augusta, Georgia. REUTERS/Mike Blake

A couple hugs while walking past a building that was heavily damaged by shelling, as Russia's attack on Ukraine continues, in Kharkiv, Ukraine. REUTERS/Alkis Konstantinidis

A girl walks outside a migrant camp near the El Chaparral border crossing in Tijuana, Mexico November 8, 2021. REUTERS/Toya Sarno Jordan

A young Oro wari indigenous man sits in his tent at the Terra Livre (Free Land) camp, a protest-camp to defend indigenous rights, land demarcation and against mining in indigenous lands in Brasilia, Brazil. REUTERS/Amanda Perobelli

A tiger from "Life of Pi" arrives at the Olivier Awards in the Royal Albert Hall in London, Britain. REUTERS/May James

Ukrainians seeking asylum in the United States are transported in a bus to the El Chaparral port of entry to wait their turn to enter the U.S., in Tijuana, Mexico. REUTERS/Toya Sarno Jordan

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

BUSINESS

A Chewing Gum That Could Reduce SARS-CoV-2 Transmission?





Key Points

In experiments using saliva samples from COVID-19 patients, the gum, which contains the ACE2 protein, neutralized the virus, according to research led by School of Dental Medicine scientists.

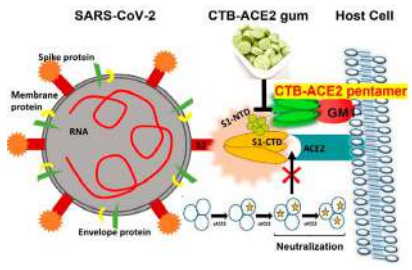
Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

A chewing gum laced with a plant-grown protein serves as a "trap" for the SARS-CoV-2 virus, reducing viral load in saliva and potentially tamping down transmission, according to a new study.

The work, led by Henry Daniell at Penn's School of Dental Medicine and performed in collaboration with scientists at the Perelman School of Medicine and School of Veterinary Medicine, as well as at The Wistar Institute and Fraunhofer USA, could lead to a low-cost tool in the arsenal against the COVID-19 pandemic. Their study was published in the journal Molecular Therapy.

"SARS-CoV-2 replicates in the salivary glands, and we know that when someone who is infected sneezes, coughs, or speaks some of that virus can be expelled and reach others," says Daniell. "This gum offers an opportunity to neutralize the virus in the saliva, giving us a simple way to possibly cut down on a source of disease transmission."

Vaccinations for COVID-19 have helped change the course of the pandemic but haven't stamped out transmission. Even people who are fully vaccinated can still become infected with SARS-CoV-2 and, according to recent research, can carry a viral load similar to those who are unvaccinated.



Penn Dental Medicine's Henry Daniell and colleagues used a plant-based protein drug production platform to grow the ACE2 protein, which was then infused in chewing gum. By either blocking the ACE2 receptor or binding to the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein, the ACE2 in the gum appears to be able to reduce viral entry into cells. (Image: Courtesy of the researchers)

Prior to the pandemic, Daniell had been studying the angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2) protein in the context of treating hypertension. His lab had grown this protein, as well as many others that may have therapeutic potential, using a patented plant-based production system. By bombarding plant material with the DNA of target proteins, they coax plant chloroplasts to take up the DNA and begin growing the proteins. The plant material, freeze-dried and ground-up, could be used as a means of delivering the protein. This system has the potential to avoid the usual obstacles to protein drug synthesis: namely, an expensive production and purification process.

Daniell's past work on ACE2 proved fortuitous in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The receptor for ACE2 on human cells also happens to bind the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein. Other research groups have shown that injections of ACE2 can reduce viral load in people with severe infections.

Meanwhile, another line of work by Daniell and Penn Dental Medicine colleague Hyun (Michel) Koo has involved research to develop a chewing gum infused with plant-grown proteins to disrupt dental plaque. Pairing his insights about ACE2 with this technology, Daniell wondered if such a gum, infused with plant-grown ACE2 proteins, could neutralize SARS-CoV-2 in the oral cavity.

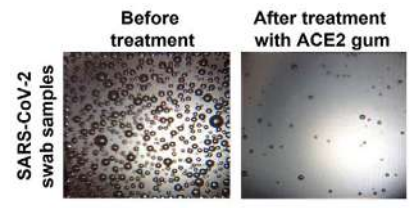
Henry Daniell of Penn's School of Dental Medicine

To find out, he reached out to Ronald Collman at Penn Medicine, a virologist and pulmonary and critical care doctor whose team, since the early stages of the pandemic, had been collecting blood, nasal swabs, saliva, and other biospecimens from COVID patients for scientific research.

"Henry contacted me and asked if we had samples to test his approach, what kind of samples would be appropriate to test, and whether we could internally validate the level of SARS-CoV-2 virus in the saliva samples," Collman says. "That led to a cross-school collaboration building on our microbiome studies."

To test the chewing gum, the team grew ACE2 in plants, paired with another compound that enables the protein to cross mucosal barriers and facilitates binding, and incorporated the resulting plant material into cinnamon-flavored gum tablets. Incubating samples obtained from nasopharyngeal swabs from COVID-positive patients with the gum, they showed that the ACE2 present could neutralize SARS-CoV-2 viruses.

Those initial investigations were followed by others at The Wistar Institute and Penn Vet, in which viruses, less-pathogenic than SARS-CoV-2, were modified to express the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein. The scientists observed that the gum largely prevented the viruses or viral particles from entering cells, either by blocking the ACE2 receptor on the cells or by binding directly to the spike protein.



Finally, the team exposed saliva samples from COVID-19 patients to the ACE2 gum and found that levels of viral RNA fell so dramatically to be almost undetectable.

The research team is currently working toward obtaining permission to conduct a clinical trial to evaluate whether the approach is safe and effective when tested in people infected with SARS-CoV-2 .

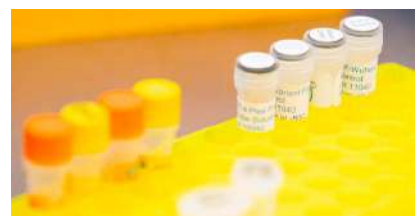
"Henry's approach of making the proteins in plants and using them orally is inexpensive, hopefully scalable; it really is clever," Collman says.

Though the research is still in early stages of development, if the clinical trials prove the gum is safe and effective, it could be given to patients whose infection status is unknown or even for a dental check-ups when masks must be removed, to reduce the likelihood of passing the virus to caregivers.

"We are already using masks and other physical barriers to reduce the chance of transmission," says Daniell. "This gum could be used as an additional tool in that fight." (Courtesy https://penntoday.upenn.edu/news)

Related

COVID-19 Omicron Variant Detected In Houston Wastewater



'Omicron in Houston is cause for concern but not panic,' Houston's chief medical officer said. (Photo/Godofredo A. Vásquez, Houston Chronicle / Staff photographer)

The Stadler lab at Rice University's Brown School processes approximately 200 samples of waste water to figure out which variant and what amount of the COVID-19 virus is found. Health authorities say a sample from Houston's wastewater system tested positive for the Omicron variant of COVID-19 on Monday, the same day a woman separately tested positive for the variant in northwest Harris County.

In Houston, there's no confirmed case just yet — but the positive wastewater indicates one could crop up soon. Mayor Sylvester Turner in a press release Monday said the news is an important reminder to schedule a booster shot for the COVID-19 vaccine.

"Vaccines help protect us, our loved ones, friends, and colleagues in the work environment," Turner said. "As the holidays approach, I encourage everyone to remain vigilant about their health and safety."

Facilitating omicron here in Texas: Our abysmal vaccination rates. Only 55% 2 shots, but in Central Texas or East Texas only 40%, many counties 30%. Booster shots? You can imagine…Since the 2010s Texas has been the epicenter of the anti-vaccine movement https://t.co/ml2mz3B-CY9

— Prof Peter Hotez MD PhD (@PeterHotez) December 7, 2021

In Harris County, only 56 percent of the county's 4.6 million people are considered fully vaccinated, according to the Houston Chronicle.

The Omicron finding came during routine sweeps of the city's wastewater for the virus that causes COVID-19, according to the Houston Health Department. That testing includes several variants of the virus, as traces of it can be found in feces of those who are infected. City health officials were also testing wastewater outside a few elementary schools across Houston, according to KHOU's Ugochi Iloka.

HAPPENING NOW: Crews with @HoustonHealth are testing waste water at local schools for Covid-19 variants like Omicron and Delta. They plan to test near 30 schools in the Houston area today @KHOU pic.twitter.com/veKMRfPNbT

— Ugochi Iloka KHOU (@UgochiKHOU) December 7, 2021

The consensus on the Omicron variant's potential impact remains unsettled. Health authorities in the federal government are working to determine if it is any more transmissible or lethal than other strains, according to the Houston Health Department.

"Omicron in Houston is cause for concern but not panic," said Dr. David Persse, Houston's chief medical officer. "It's important to remember that vaccination is our best tool to reduce cases, prevent serious illness and death, and slow the emergence of new variants."

The city of Houston provides free COVID-19 vaccines, including boosters, to anyone 5 and older. A list of vaccination sites can be found on the city's website. (Courtesy The Houston Chronicle)

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

COMMUNITY

Scientists Around The World Are Now Fighting The Next Pandemic

By improving water sanitation, we can reduce the spread of antibiotic resistant bacteria. Image: Riccardo Mayer/Shutterstock.com

KEY POINTS

Children in developing countries are acquiring an anti- biotic-resistant infection due to their regular contact with poor sanitation and limited clean water.

This means, when they do fall ill, there is more than a 50% chance an antibiotic treatment will fail.

The practice known as WASH is vital to reduce the spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

It is also crucial countries do more to treat sewage, improve sanitation and develop sufficient infrastructure.

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

If a two-year-old child living in poverty in India or Bangladesh gets sick with a common bacterial infection, there is more than a 50% chance an antibiotic treatment will fail. Somehow the child has acquired an antibiotic resistant infection – even to drugs to which they may never have been exposed. How? Unfortunately, this child also lives in a place with limited clean water and less waste management, bringing them into frequent contact with faecal matter. This means they are regularly exposed to millions of resistant genes and bacteria, including potentially untreatable superbugs. This sad story is shockingly common, especially in places where pollution is rampant and clean water is limited.

For many years, people believed antibiotic resistance in bacteria was primarily driven by imprudent use of antibiotics in clinical and veterinary settings. But growing evidence suggests that environmental factors may be of equal or greater importance to the spread of antibiotic resistance, especially in the developing world.

This article focuses on antibiotic resistant bacteria, but drug resistance also occurs in types of other microorganisms – such as resistance in pathogenic viruses, fungi, and protozoa (called antimicrobial resistance or AMR). This means that our ability to treat all sorts of infectious disease is increasingly hampered by resistance, potentially including coronaviruses like SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19. Overall, use of antibiotics, antivirals, and antifungals clearly must be reduced, but in most of the world, improving water, sanitation, and hygiene practice – a practice known as WASH – is also critically important. If we can ensure cleaner water and safer food everywhere, the spread of antibiotic resistant bacteria will be reduced across the environment, including within and between people and animals.

As recent recommendations on AMR from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), and World Health Organization (WHO) suggest that the "superbug problem" will not be solved by more prudent antibiotic use alone. It also requires global improvements in water quality, sanitation, and hygiene. Otherwise, the next pandemic might be worse than COVID-19.

Bacteria under stress

Over 70% of the world has no community wastewater treatment or even sewers; and most faecal matter, containing resistant genes and bacteria, goes directly into surface and groundwater, often via open drains. This means that people who live in places without faecal waste management are regularly exposed to antibiotic resistance in many ways. Exposure is even possible of people who may not have taken antibiotics, like our child in South Asia.

How antibiotic resistance spreadsImage: WHO

Antibiotic resistance is everywhere, but it is not surprising that resistance is greatest in places with poor sanitation because factors other than use are important. For example, a fragmented civil infrastructure, political corruption, and a lack of centralized healthcare also play key roles. As an example of antibiotic resistance, the "superbug" gene, blaNDM-1, was first detected in India in 2007 (although it was probably present in other regional countries). But soon thereafter, it was found in a hospital patient in Sweden and then in Germany. It was ultimately detected in 2013 in Svalbard in the High Arctic. In parallel, variants of this gene appeared locally, but have evolved as they move. Similar evolution has occurred as the COVID-19 virus has spread. Relative to antibiotic resistance, humans are not the only "travellers" that can carry resistance. Wildlife, such as migratory birds, can also acquire resistant bacteria and genes from contaminated water or soils and then fly great distances carrying resistance in their gut from places with poor water quality to places with good water quality. During travel, they defecate along their path, potentially planting resistance almost anywhere. The global trade of foods also facilitates spread of resistance from country to country and across the globe.

Resistant bacteria are not the only infectious agents that might be spread by environmental contamination. SARS-CoV-2 has been found in faeces and inactive virus debris found in sewage, but all evidence suggests water is not a major route of COVID-19 spread – although there are limited data from places with poor sanitation and each case differs. But there are common roots to disease spread – pollution, poor water quality, and inadequate hygiene. Using fewer antibiotics is critical to reducing resistance. However, without also providing safer sanitation and improved water quality at global scales, resistance will continue to increase, potentially creating the next pandemic. Such a combined approach is central to the new WHO/FAO/OIE recommendations on AMR.

Simple steps

It is clear we must use a holistic approach (what is now called "One Health") to reduce the spread of resistance across people, animals, and the environment. But how do we do this in a world that is so unequal? It is now accepted that clean water is a human right embedded in the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. But how can we achieve affordable "clean water for all" in a world where geopolitics often outweigh local needs and realities?

Simple is more sustainable. As an obvious example, we need to reduce open defecation in a cheap and socially acceptable manner. This is the best immediate solution in places with limited or unused sanitation infrastructure, such as rural India. Innovation is without doubt important, but it needs to be tailored to local realities to stand a chance of being sustained into the future. Strong leadership and governance is also critical. Antibiotic resistance is much lower in places with less corruption and strong governance. Resistance also is lower in places with greater public health expenditure, which implies social policy, community action, and local leadership can be as important as technical infrastructure.

Richer countries must work with poorer ones. But, actions against resistance should focus on local needs and plans because each country is different. We need to remember that resistance is everyone's problem and all countries have a role in solving the problem. This is evident from the COVID-19 pandemic, where some countries have displayed commendable cooperation. Richer countries should invest in helping to provide locally suitable waste management options for poorer ones – ones that can be maintained and sustained. This would have a more immediate impact than any "toilet of the future" technology. Antibiotic resistance will also impact on the fight against COVID-19. As an example, secondary bacterial infections are common in seriously ill patients with COVID-19, especially when admitted to an ICU. So if such pathogens are resistant to critical antibiotic therapies, they will not work and result in higher death rates. Regardless of context, improved water, sanitation, and hygiene must be the backbone of stemming the spread of AMR, including antibiotic resistance, to avoid the next pandemic. Some progress is being made in terms of global cooperation, but efforts are still too fragmented. Some countries are making progress, whereas others are not.

Resistance needs to be seen in a similar light to other global challenges – something that threatens human existence and the planet. As with addressing climate change, protecting biodiversity, or COVID-19, global cooperation is needed to reduce the evolution and spread of resistance. Cleaner water and improved hygiene are the key. If we do not work together now, we all will pay an even greater price in the future. (Courtesy weformum.org)