

Former CDC Head Tom Frieden Is Back In The News, And It Isn't For His Terrible Science



By Josh Bloom — August 24, 2018



Tom Frieden Is In The News But Not For His Terrible Science [1]

The American Council on Science and Health has had plenty of problems with Tom Frieden, M.D., the former head of the CDC and New York City health commissioner (See [Addition By Subtraction At CDC: Good Riddance, Tom Frieden](#) [2]). He's back in the news, [for alleged sexual abuse of a Brooklyn woman](#) [3], but if assaulting science and health was a crime he'd have been arrested numerous times in the last 16 years. We'll list just a few.

- In the summer of 2014 workers at Frieden's CDC managed to stumble upon [a box of smallpox samples in a storage closet](#) [4] and failed to inform Congress of the incident. (See: [Smallpox In A Big Box With No Locks](#) [5])
- Around that same time, another group of his scientists sent out samples of anthrax which were supposed to be dead but were [alive](#) [6].
- Astoundingly, at the same time, while working with a standard strain of flu, CDC researchers managed to accidentally contaminate it with a dangerous the H5N1 (bird flu) strain.
- Later that year Frieden came up with a ridiculous and unworkable plan to keep Ebola from getting into the US. (See [Preventing Ebola: Screen — Or Screen Door?](#) [7]) which involved taking the temperature of people of people leaving countries that had an Ebola outbreak. The result? Over a two-month period, 36,000 people leaving Western Africa were detained and zero cases of Ebola were detected.
- He baffled the rest of the world [by fabricating a blood sugar level so low it had no clinical relevance](#) [8] and tried to panic 80 million Americans into believing they had pre-diabetes.
- Before he ran the CDC and was getting it wrong in New York City, he claimed that banning

trans fats would prevent diabetes too, and advocated for banning them. He ignored experts here and elsewhere which noted it was the calories in the donuts and pies, not the trans fats, that were the problem. Diabetes in New York City went up and he then declared we should ban Big Gulps.

- Vaping and e-cigarettes, a consumer-driven approach to smoking cessation, were declared equal in harm to cigarettes while he ran the CDC. But with no evidence to show that, he relied on surveys, which are notoriously inaccurate, to manufacture an "epidemic."

But Frieden's worst legacy is still haunting us. Frieden was at the helm at CDC when its disastrous "guidelines" for opioid prescribing were being formulated, also in response to epidemics he claims are everywhere. And he was still there in 2016 when the guidelines were finalized. Tens of thousands of people have died and many more have suffered the consequences of the CDC's "war on opioids," which was really a war against pain patients.

The jury is still out on some of his issues, and maybe a new jury is in his future, but at least when it comes to science and health, justice may finally be done.

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Links

[1] <https://www.cnn.com/2018/08/24/health/frieden-cdc-arrest-forcibly-touching/index.html>

[2] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2017/01/03/addition-subtraction-cdc-good-riddance-tom-frieden-10664>

[3] <http://www.cnn.com/2018/08/24/health/frieden-cdc-arrest-forcibly-touching/index.html>

[4] <https://baltimore.cbslocal.com/2014/07/10/employees-never-notified-about-smallpox-vials-found-in-storage-room/>

[5] http://www.science20.com/pfired_but_still_kicking/smallpox_in_a_big_box_with_no_locks-140269

[6] <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/12/science/cdc-closes-anthrax-and-flu-labs-after-accidents.html>

[7] https://www.science20.com/pfired_but_still_kicking/preventing_ebola_screen_or_screen_door-146605

[8] <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/commentary/ct-prediabetes-diabetes-pharma-epidemic-perspec-0801-jm-20160729-story.html>