

☀ **More viral pandemics in our future**

[Professor Peter Piot](#), a world-renowned infectious disease expert and Director of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (how appropriate that a medical school dedicated to the study of infectious diseases has placed the crucial role of adequate hygiene in its name), has played an integral role in controlling COVID-19. However, his chosen field of specialization was not always regarded nor respected as critical to human health. When a young and eager student of medicine some 40 years ago, a professor buttonholed him one day and advised “There’s no future in infectious diseases. They’ve all been solved”. As the world emerges from a lockdown lifestyle and begins to imagine what life going forward may be like, Dr. Piot warns the global populace to make a concerted effort to prepare for the next pandemic.

☀ **The next pandemic?**

Dr. Piot forecasts more viral pandemics due to three factors: global travel, lack of harmony with nature, and humans’ improper treatment of animals. The latter highlights [zoonotic diseases](#) which spread from animals to humans. The Centre for Disease Control estimates that 60% of known infectious diseases can be spread from animals, and 75% of new or emerging infectious diseases in people come from animals.

☀ **Not prophetic – simply paying attention**

Global unpreparedness for a disaster of any kind – viral, bioterror, chemical warfare - was well known prior to COVID-19. Yet, the world fiddled. Several sources document the Bush administration year 2005 request for a nationwide disaster relief plan which would close all US borders and unite Americans through a network of responsibilities, including isolation. Apathy was rampant, as reported in [The untold story of the birth of social distancing](#) “There were two words between ‘shut’ and ‘up’ initially”, said Dr. Howard Markel, who directs the University of Michigan’s Center for the History of Medicine and who played a role in shaping the policy as a member of the Pentagon research team. “It was really ugly.” By 2017, when the plan was complete and robust, other interests prevailed at the White House and the document was shelved. That year, the Harvard Business Review published [The World Is Completely Unprepared for a Global Pandemic](#) adding “No one is talking about it.”

☀ **So, what’s new?**

\$\$\$Money\$\$\$

1. Public sector stimulus packages. The Spanish flu pandemic of 1918-1920 occurred a good decade prior to the [Great Depression](#) of 1929-1939, the destitute conditions of the latter sparking “fundamental changes in economic institutions, macroeconomic policy and economic theory”. Accordingly, once COVID-19 lockdown public health measures were mandated, federal governments in most countries in the industrialized West executed cash-in-hand programs to allow citizens to abide by public health advice and keep food on the table and a roof over their heads.
2. Public sector investment in vaccines. Since year 2000, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance has received billions of dollars in financial support, including [US\\$3.4B from the USA](#), [US\\$886M from the EU](#), [US\\$662M from Canada](#) and more from many other countries. This collaboration, foresight and funding supported the necessary groundwork from which the completion of COVID-19 vaccines was expedited.
3. Private investment in vaccines. Published in January 2019 in The Wall Street Journal [Bill Gates: The Best Investment I’ve Ever Made](#), Gates describes his US\$10B investment over two decades in vaccine research, including the top three organizations: Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance; the Global Fund; and the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. He too warned of complacency, while foretelling a profitable return. “*Even fewer are watching out for them [...]. Without more funding over the next 18 months, all three of these institutions will have to dramatically scale back their efforts to fight disease and keep people healthy. This shouldn’t be allowed to happen. These organizations are not trivial or expendable. In fact, they are probably the best investments our foundation has ever made.*”

Twitter feeds, Instagram, Messages, etc.



In keeping with the digital age, Pope Francis recently tweeted precautionary COVID-19 advice quoting **Matthew 10:16**, “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be you therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” **FF**