

Ishmael Reed: This new virus, XBB.1.5 they say, is more contagious than the others.

Michael LeNoir: More infectious, more contagious. It doesn't seem clinically any more dangerous for vaccinated people. If you have all three vaccinations, the virus doesn't cause any more hospitalizations than deaths, but it's more infectious. It's been estimated that almost every child in America's already had Covid at least once.

Ishmael Reed: It affects children the most, or what?

Michael LeNoir: No, it's just a, it has been so rampant throughout the last couple of years. And children have not been vaccinated. For most of them said of Covid hasn't been a big deal for them. But the new variants are more infectious, more contagious. But at the same time, it does appear that they are no more dangerous than respiratory viruses. So they have a rationale for wanting you to survive so they can live in your lungs. The theory is that the viruses will be around for a long time, but they won't cause any more deaths or hospitalizations.

Ishmael Reed: Are hospitalizations decreasing or what?

Michael LeNoir: No, hospitalizations are steady at three to four hundred a day, so it's still dangerous. The problem is that the medicines that people who are at high-risk use to take care of these viruses need to be fixed against these new variants. That's the first thing. The second thing is that they are more infectious, more unvaccinated people will get Covid, and the rates will go up. But they're not nearly as high as when Omicron came through here last year.

Ishmael Reed: How's this affecting black people?

Michael LeNoir: You know what? Statistics for Black people are kind of evening and out about who will get vaccinated and who isn't. Although this third vaccine for children has not reached more than 15 or 20%, Black people are less hesitant about taking the vaccine. So it does seem to be evening out more like Whites.

Ishmael Reed: Well, do you believe the statistic from the CDC that, for the first time, the White longevity rate is lower than that of Blacks?

Michael LeNoir: I don't know that to be true. I know it's lowered the longevity for Whites for something like three years. I haven't seen the statistics as opposed to blacks. I find it hard to believe.

Ishmael Reed: They're talking about opioids and fentanyl and the anti-vaccine sentiment among some Whites.

Michael LeNoir: A lot of whites. The numbers suggest that Blacks and Whites are about the same regarding hesitancy.

Ishmael Reed: Well, that's a change.

Michael LeNoir: A change. Yeah.

Ishmael Reed: So what's in store? What should people be on the lookout for now? More viruses?

Michael LeNoir: More variants. There may be variants that are more contagious and invade the immune system a little better. I found an article in *The New York Times* about our future with Covid and what to look out for. There are a lot of articles that talk about what will happen in the future with this pandemic. And the reason it happens is not that everything we do is the cause of the nature of the viral infection.

Ishmael Reed: Okay. I'll take a look at it. All right, man. Thank you. Talk to you later.