RFK may replace entire panel of CDC vaccine advisors again, ally lets slip

Baseless speculation?

As quickly as the cheers that ACIP was disbanded came, there were also doubts about the claim's accuracy. Decades ago, Malone was a researcher who worked on mRNA technology, but who has since been described as "unhinged" and "pretty wacky" by former colleagues. He embraces anti-vaccine views—and the label "anti-vaxxer"—and has suggested that vaccines cause "a form of AIDS," among other things.

After Malone made his claim Thursday, Ars Technica reached out to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which oversees CDC, for confirmation and comment. Just before 10 pm ET, Malone posted on social media again, retracting the claim:

"I have now been told that this was a miscommunication, and in fact the decision about how to proceed has not been made, and dissolving and reforming remains one of [the] options being considered."

After that, HHS responded to Ars Technica, pointing out Malone's retraction and adding the statement from HHS spokesperson Andrew Nixon: "Unless officially announced by us, any assertions about what we are doing next is baseless speculation."

In an interview with The Wall Street Journal on Thursday, Malone said that he and others were told the committee would

be disbanded. The Journal also obtained a text message Malone sent to other ACIP members earlier on Thursday, saying, “I am so, so tired of the HHS incompetence,” and that HHS was trying to throw him “under the bus” over his earlier statements. Malone confirmed the text message to the Journal.

It remains unclear if Kennedy and HHS are considering recreating ACIP. In a statement, the advocacy group Defend Public Health emphasized that, whatever Kennedy does, HHS needs to follow federal regulations, as Judge Murphy’s ruling indicated. “It seems like the simplest way to do that is to reconstitute the committee that he wrongly fired, which had been put together following proper legal procedures. But if he wants to start from scratch, he still needs to follow the law.”

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