

Tom Frieden

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Mark Masselli: This is Conversations on Healthcare. I'm Mark Masselli.

Margaret Flinter: And I'm Margaret Flinter

Mark Masselli: Well, Margaret, it appears this year's flu epidemic is still of major concern around the countries. The number of patients entering clinicians' offices and emergency rooms with flu complications have continued to rise.

Margaret Flinter: And this year's flu season has actually been the deadliest since the swine flu outbreak of 2009 with outbreaks leading to more hospitalizations and deaths than we've seen in a decade. It has put a real strain on the nation's health system and you know, Mark, it is not consistent across the country, still a lot of problems in many states.

Mark Masselli: Certainly are, and a large sector of the population was not immunized, and the CDC and the US Surgeon General are urging folks who haven't had the flu shot - there is still time.

Margaret Flinter: And this topic brings us to our guest today, Mark. Dr. Tom Frieden is really a giant in the world of public health. He was director of the CDC for eight years under President Obama, before that well known as the Health Commissioner for the City of New York. He is spearheading an exciting new global initiative now.

Mark Masselli: Dr. Frieden is now President and CEO of Resolve to Save Lives, a 5-year initiative to save 100 million lives globally. He has got some powerful partners in this quest, really looking forward to having Dr. Frieden back on the show, and Lori Robertson will stop by, the managing editor of FactCheck.org, but no matter what the topic, you can hear all of our shows by going to chcradio.com. As always, if you have comments, please email us to chcradio@chc1.com or find us on Facebook or Twitter, and we would love hearing from you.

Margaret Flinter: We will get you our interview with Dr. Tom Frieden of Resolve to Save Lives in just a moment, but first, here is our producer, Marianne O'Hare with this week's headline news.

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Marianne O'Hare: I'm Marianne O'Hare with these healthcare headlines. As we are gathering at the National Governors Association, a lot of talk about healthcare, bipartisan group of five governors issued a healthcare blueprint for rational approaches moving forward on healthcare policy. Governor Hickenlooper of Colorado and Governor Wolf of Pennsylvania, both democrats, Governors Sandoval of Nevada and Kasich of Ohio, both Republicans and independent Bill Walker of Alaska, they are all asking the Federal Government to an Act Legislation that will bolster the insurance market, increase drug and hospital care, price transparency, and support healthcare access for all Americans. Apple a day may keep the doctor away, but Apple is bringing the doctor in house with little fanfare and a newly launched website Apple has announced, it is launching a healthcare company that says it will deliver the world's best healthcare experience to its employees. The tech giant announcing the launch of AC Wellness starting with two new health clinics that will serve Apple employees and their families, they have openings listed on the website for primary care clinicians, fitness, and wellness experts and other health providers. The persons of healthcare clinics on the Apple campus serve as yet another hiring perk for

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employees, but there are also plans to use the clinics as incubator for testing out their sweet of health-related products being developed. Apple recently announced a partnership with Stanford Medicine and the Telehealth Company, American Well to launch the first of its kind, large scale Apple Heart Study using tens of thousands of Apple watch users to gather data on the prevalence of atrial fibrillation. Speaking of AFib, it can lead to stroke and cardiac arrest and a new study suggests heart attack victims fare much better if a bystander is able to deploy a defibrillator on the spot before emergency help arrives. The new study looked at 2500 cardiac arrests that happened in public places that were equipped with an automated external defibrillator or AED. Cardiac patients who were treated onsite with the AED immediately were more likely to survive the heart attack and also suffer fewer long-term impairments. Verily, the healthcare unit of Alphabet, formerly part of Google Life Sciences is reportedly getting into the insurance business. The tech giant in talks with insurers to take on the risk of managing large patient populations using data to ultimately bring cost down. The population and health management sector is poised to grow in coming years, especially among payers and players who can demonstrate real cost reduction in managing those populations.

I am Marianne O'Hare with these healthcare headlines.

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Mark Masselli: We are speaking today with Dr. Tom Frieden, President and Chief Executive Officer of Resolve to Save Lives at the nonprofit organization, Vital Strategies, dedicated to saving 100 million lives by building a stronger global public health system. Dr. Frieden served as the Director of US Centers for disease control and prevention for eight years. Before that, he was the commissioner for the city of New York where he advanced sweeping initiatives to improve public health including launching the Bloomberg Philanthropies initiative to reduce tobacco use. Dr. Frieden earned his medical and public health degrees from Columbia University.

Dr. Frieden, welcome back to Conversations in Healthcare.

Tom Frieden: Thank you very much for having me.

Mark Masselli: You presided over eight years over the CDC and before that health commissioner for the City of New York where you launched initiatives that have limited smoking in public places, tackled trans fats in foods, and confronted infectious disease like HIV. Now you are at the helm of this nonprofit global initiative, Resolve to Save Lives, which seeks to address big health challenges, that you've built your career around. I am wondering if you could tell our listeners what you hope to bring from your previous experience to this new global venture.

Tom Frieden: I feel I had an extraordinary privilege of being Health Commissioner in New York City and Director of the CDC to learn from terrific public health doctors, nurses in the US and around the world. It gave me a particular advantage point to see globally where are the key areas that were poised to make progress and we identified really two areas where I feel we can save the most of lives with a combination of philanthropic supported effort and government action. The first of those is in preventing heart attacks and strokes and in that part of the Resolve to Save Lives initiative, we think we can help countries implement programs that will save 100 million lives over the next 30 years. In the second area, we think it is possible to greatly catalyze more rapid progress preventing epidemics and if we're successful, we look back and we'll see this as an inflection point of big decrease in heart attacks

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and strokes and a big decrease in the risk of epidemics and our approach at Resolve is to have simple, scalable, fast interventions that will be able to make a difference.

Margaret Flinter: So Dr. Frieden, you are being supported by some very high-profile players in the global health arena, certainly the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, Bloomberg Philanthropies and of course the World Health Organization, World Bank and the CDC. Tell us a little bit about how these partner organizations are working together with Vital Strategies to help you meet the goals that you've laid out in Resolve to Save Lives.

Tom Frieden: We're so fortunate to have very generous donations of 225 million dollars worth five years from Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Resolve to Save Lives is an initiative of an organization called Vital Strategy. It has offices in more than 60 countries including more than 100 staff who are working side by side in countries around the world including World Health Organization, World Bank, The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health where there is an urgent need and no available resources to provide the support that's needed.

Mark Masselli: You know, your Resolve to Save Lives is focusing on two key areas of public health, and you've tackled these public health issues quite successfully with programs such as your smoking ban and transfat ban in New York City and confronted epidemics such as HIV and more recently Ebola. I am wondering if you could talk about some of the important public health campaigns you've undertaken, what you've learnt from them, and the challenges of scaling up some of those early successes.

Tom Frieden: What makes for success in global health is having three fundamental basins covered of technical rigor, operational excellence, and political will. It's so important that there is what I refer to as a technical package of high-impact interventions that when implemented will make a really big difference. On the operational side, if we could manage them with [Inaudible 00:08:52] tuberculosis control where policies from the World Health Organization helped countries establish its accountability for every single patient diagnosed, what is their outcome, and also political will, making the policy initiative to tax tobacco and soda. These are decisions that have life and death consequences, whether it has been making New York City more clean or working with communities throughout West Africa, to stop the Ebola epidemic, they have to have those three components.

Margaret Flinter: Certainly, one of the greatest public health interventions of the past century has been the development of our vaccines, their life saving and disease preventing evidence is irrefutable, but we've in the frontlines in community health seen a resurgence of preventable diseases like measles and pertussis or whooping cough. This year, the flu epidemic has been so harsh, we're seeing pediatric deaths that we haven't seen in years, but the vaccine was only administered to about half of the country's population. It's still an incredibly important hedge against contracting the flu, maybe you could talk with us a little bit about the challenge of getting people to comply with vaccines.

Tom Frieden: Vaccines are truly a public health miracle. They have saved literally hundreds of millions of lives, eradicated smallpox, brought polio to the brink of eradication, saved many millions of lives from measles. What happens as those diseases get less common is that people become less interested in getting vaccinated. In Africa, there has been a wonderful program, which the Gates Foundation, they call, PATH and others have been central to creating a vaccine for meningitis. That vaccine is available for less than a dollar a dose, it is very effective and it is given to people up to age 29, that is usually a

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population that is quite harder to reach, much easier to vaccinate kids and yet the vaccine rate in that campaign were more than 90%, and the reason for that was, people see meningitis.

In some ways, vaccines have been a victim of their own success.

Margaret Flinter: Alright.

Tom Frieden: Because people don't see those diseases everywhere, they may be less interested in getting a vaccine. The flu vaccine even in a good year isn't nearly as effective as we've liked, it is about 60% effective. This year, it looks like it is going to be somewhere in the 15 to 25% effective range, which is nowhere near what we would like, but it is the best option, 20%, after all, it is a lot better than 0%.

And I know there is a lot of interest in the universal flu vaccine, it is probably a decade or decades away. This year, we could increase investment in understanding which vaccines work better and any one of those three vaccines is going to be better, but only actual data will show and the Centers for Disease Control is the best organization to study which of those vaccines works best, but doesn't have the relatively modest resources that would allow it to figure that out, it is sometimes frustrating and sometimes ironic that we may be willing to invest in a very important effort. It is great the time we can put in billions of dollars into that, but for 10 or 20 million dollars, they may be able to get the current vaccine very effective for people within a couple of years.

Mark Masselli: We are speaking today with Dr. Tom Frieden, President and Chief Executive Officer of Resolve to Save Lives, a 5-year initiative at the nonprofit organization, Vital Strategies. Dr. Frieden, you say that we are at a tipping point globally and you expect a tsunami of non-communicable diseases, it would be wonderful if you could tell our listeners what had you most concerned about those looming health threats.

Tom Frieden: Two areas that I am most concerned about are the two areas we are focusing on at resolve, cardiovascular disease and epidemic. In terms of cardiovascular disease, the leading cause of death in the world, it causes 1 out of 3 deaths and most of them are preventable. 10 million people a year are killed by high blood pressure, that's as many as are killed by all infectious diseases combined. Globally, about 1.4 billion people have high blood pressure, but only 10 or 15% of them have it under control and treatment can be scaled up, but what is happening now is that blood pressure goes untreated and all over Africa and other parts of low and middle-income countries, we are having an epidemic of strokes, heart attack that are causing personal tragedies. We think there are clear wins to be had in cardiovascular preventions as there are in epidemic prevention and if we failed to do that, the cost will be in millions of lives and billions or even trillions of dollars in avoidable health and societal cost.

Margaret Flinter: You spent 8 years at the helm of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention under President Obama. The current administration has been taking a different approach. There have been funding cuts to many key health programs and a significant cut to the CDC's budget. Share your thoughts on the progress that you were able to make during your tenure and in this very difficult couple of weeks that we've experienced with another mass shooting, your thoughts about the restriction on funding to study gun violence specifically.

Tom Frieden: Let me start, with the 8 years that I had the privilege to lead CDC. We left America stronger and healthier and we did that through strengthening systems to find and stop health threats in

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this country and to improve ability to protect this country from threats that might arise from other countries. The proposal of the current administration or the CDC's budget for the next budget year would bring the CDC budget down to its lowest level in 15 years that would be more than a 20% cut. It would also really harm CDC's ability to prevent heart attacks, strokes, and cancer by doing something called block granting and cutting those programs. That's just a very bad government. It does not allow the CDC to support state in running effective programs and it makes it easier for those programs to be cut in the future as in fact the administration is proposing in this year to cut the block grant. It also would cut a very important program that helps state and municipal health departments find and stop threats in schools, in hospitals. It is a very successful program that has stopped outbreaks of drug-resistant bacteria and it would be ended under the administration's proposal and the proposal would cut by two-thirds CDC's full deployed doctors and epidemiologists who are working around the world to help other countries stop diseases there so that we don't have to fight them here and that would make Americans less safe. I hear from both houses of congress a strong support for CDC.

So, I am hopeful that when the '18 budget and the '19 budget are finalized, administration's proposals will not come to task. The second question is about coverage under the Affordable Care Act. It is absolutely the case that the Affordable Care Act resulted in more than 20 million people having access to health insurance and health coverage who didn't have it before and that saves lives. We are spending more than any other rich country on healthcare who are getting worst health outcomes. I hope there can be a bipartisan approach to saying, what are some things that we can do in healthcare that will actually help us get more value to the dollars we put in and improve the health status of this country so we stop being a laggard in health status? In terms of gun violence, I've been deeply moved by what some of the students of the most recent shooting have spoken out about and the CDC doesn't advocate the policy, CDC provides data on what the science shows. Every year, we ask Congress for 10 million dollars to do research on gun violence and every year congress declines to provide those resources, but we were able to support state governments in more than 40 states to study what is happening really far too often. We have rates that are many, many, many times higher than any other operating gun country.

Mark Masselli: You know, Dr. Frieden, I was thinking earlier as you were saying that you were inspired by physicians and scientists in the work that you were doing and now you are taking on a challenge about global health of course inspiring you and whose inspiring that next generation of young people to get engaged in these public health initiatives.

Tom Frieden: For me personally, my father was the biggest influence on my life and he said very simply, you got to help the people and I tried to structure my career to save as many lives as possible. I have been deeply inspired by leaders in public health like Bill Foege who led the efforts to eradicate small pox and rigorous science, excellent management, eloquence, and listening to what is really happening on the frontlines. Many of us in public health get most inspired when we see what is happening on the frontlines, whether it is the public health nurse who was the person who sounded the alarm for this terrific outbreak of HIV related to opiate use in Indiana.

That individual saved hundreds of lives by being alert or the patients who come to us and tell us what either the disease means, or the tragedy means. I became quite close to Terry [PH] who was one of our spokespeople for tips from former smokers at CDC and I was just speaking about her. She is a wonderful woman who wants to share her history. She had started smoking as a teenager in North Carolina, picking tobacco and she developed cancer in her 40s, died in her 50s, and by sharing her story, she probably saved more lives than most doctors will, in their entire career.

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Margaret Flinter: We've been speaking today with Dr. Tom Frieden, President and Chief Executive Officer of Resolve to Save Lives, a 5-year initiative at the nonprofit organization, Vital Strategies, dedicated to saving 100 million lives by building a stronger global public health system. You can know more about their work by going to resolvetosavelives.org or follow them on Twitter at ResolveTSL and also at Dr. Frieden.

Dr. Frieden, we thank you so much for your contribution to public health and for joining us once again on Conversations on Healthcare.

Tom Frieden: Thank you so much for having me on.

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Mark Masselli: At Conversations on Healthcare, we want our audience to be truly in the know when it comes to the facts about healthcare reform and policy. Lori Robertson is an award winning journalist and managing editor of FactCheck.org, a nonpartisan and nonprofit consumer advocate for voters that aim to reduce the level of deception in US politics. Lori, what have you got for us this week?

Lori Robertson: The February 14th, deadly mass shooting at a high school in Parkland, Florida has brought the public health issue of guns to the floor. One topic of discussion is background checks. Results of a national survey published in 2017 show that 13% of US gun owners who purchased a firearm in the past 2 years did so without a background check. Senator, Bernie Sanders was wrong when he recently said that the figure was 3 times as high. Sanders was referring to a statistic based on a nearly 24-year-old survey when he told NBC News' Chuck Todd on February 18th, "40% of the guns in this country are sold without any background checks." In January 2017, the Annals of Internal Medicine published the results of a study on firearm acquisitions offered by researchers at Northeastern University in Harvard. It concluded that "22% of current US gun owners who acquired a firearm within the past 2 years did so without a background check." Just 13% of those who were sold a gun, as Sanders said, in the previous 2 years, did not have a background check according to the data. The findings were based on an online survey of 1613 adult gun owners in 2015. The older 40% figure had been questionable before. That 1994 survey asked whether participants "acquired this gun from a licensed firearm dealer," and 64.3% answered "yes" or "probably was/think so" leaving about 40% who said they didn't acquire the gun from a licensed dealer, but the question wasn't specifically about background checks and that is my FactCheck for this week. I am Lori Robertson, Managing Editor of FactCheck.org.

FactCheck.org is committed to factual accuracy from the country's major political players and is a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania. If you have a fact that you'd liked checked, e-mail us at chcradio.com, we'll have FactCheck.org's Lori Robertson check it out for you here on Conversations on Healthcare.

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Each week, Conversations Highlights are bright idea about how to make wellness a part of our communities and everyday lives.

When Wichita, Kansas' nurse practitioner, Michael Wawrzewski learned of the harsh and often fatal conditions that expectant mothers endure in Sub-Saharan Africa, all because they live too far from a

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medical clinic, he thought there had to be a way to fill that need. He came up with the solution, Clinic In A Can, transforming shipping containers into fully equipped mobile clinics and operating rooms that can be shipped anywhere in the world where there is a need.

Michael Wawrzewski: When you walk in the inside, you will believe or think that you are inside your doctor's office or inside of the clinical environment, they look exactly the same.

Margaret Flinter: Wawrzewski learned from his early iterations that gas power generators could be problematic in low resource areas and switch all of these portable clinics to solar power which he says was a game changer.

Michael Wawrzewski: Solar power has become the cornerstone of how we re-engineered how we power clinic fitted now. Every piece of equipment, we can run it off for 500 watts of electricity, which means 6 solar panels and 8 batteries are enough to run a clinic for 18 hours.

Margaret Flinter: Since its founding a decade ago, Clinics In A Can have been delivered to War Torn Sudan, to earthquake ravaged Haiti and more recently to Santa Rosa, California, an area decimated by the wildfires that also destroyed the main community health center there.

Naomi Fuchs: These are converted shipping containers that arrives fully equipped as a medical examiner.

Margaret Flinter: Santa Rosa Community Health Center CEO, Naomi Fuchs, says that the portable clinic was a God send for her providers. There are roughly 120 square feet shipping container clinics, designed to support workflow and to become a permanent fixture in low resource areas.

Michael Wawrzewski: A containerized clinic is something that is a turnkey. It's all built in the United States. We equip it with the best equipment and we ship it as a completed project that once on the ground within 20 to 30 minutes is ready to be used.

Margaret Flinter: Clinic In A Can, a professionally outfitted shipping container fully equipped with medical and surgical equipment providing quality, state of the art medical facilities and a low resource area, now that's a bright idea.

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This is Conversations on Healthcare. I'm Margaret Flinter.

Mark Masselli: And I'm Mark Masselli, peace and health.

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Recording: Conversations on Healthcare broadcast from W E S U at Wesleyan University streaming live at wesufm.org and brought to you by the community health center.

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