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Inside C2

Southern DAILY

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U.S. Senate delays debt limit vote as Democrats mull McConnell offer

WASHINGTON, Oct 6 (Reuters) - The U.S. Senate postponed a vote to head off a federal debt default on Wednesday as Democrats considered a Republican proposal that could potentially defuse the partisan standoff that threatens the broader economy.

Democrats called off an early afternoon vote and planned a closed-door meeting after Senate's top Republican, Mitch McConnell, floated a plan that would buy more time to resolve the issue. McConnell proposed that his party would allow an extension of the federal debt ceiling into December.

Without congressional action to raise the \$28.4 trillion debt limit, the Treasury Department has forecast that it will run out of ways to meet all its obligations by Oct. 18.

It was not clear if Democrats would accept McConnell's offer, given that it still hinged on the Senate eventually hiking the debt limit without Republican votes through a process called budget "reconciliation." Both President Joe Biden and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer have rejected that course.

"We will ... allow Democrats to use normal procedures to pass an emergency debt limit extension at a fixed dollar amount to cover current spending levels into December," McConnell said in a statement on Wednesday.

Democrats' reaction to McConnell's proposal ranged from skeptical to angry.

"That sounds like a terrible idea," said Senator Chris Murphy. "It sounds like more games from Senator McConnell."

Senator Mazie Hirono had a blunter label, calling the offer "bullshit."

If Democrats go along with the proposal, they would have to address the issue again in December, just as federal funding is due to expire. That could complicate their efforts to pass two massive spending bills that make up much of Biden's domestic agenda.

Schumer did not immediately respond to questions about the offer.

There are less than two weeks to go before the Treasury Department expects to run



out of ways to meet the government's expenses. The Bipartisan Policy Center said on Wednesday that unemployment insurance payments, salaries for millions of federal employees and medical insurance payments could be delayed without a debt-ceiling hike.

Analysts say a default could upend the global financial system and cause millions of lost jobs.

Even a close call would likely be damaging. A 2011 debt ceiling dispute that Congress resolved two days before the borrowing limit was due to be reached caused stocks to tumble and prompted a first-ever credit downgrade for U.S. debt.

Moody's Investors Service said on Tuesday it expects Washington will ultimately raise the debt limit, however, and U.S. stock indexes rose on Wednesday as investors grew more optimistic that Congress could reach a deal.

A more telling indication of investor relief was evident in the U.S. Treasury market, which would be directly affected by a U.S. default. Rates on 1-month T-bills - the securities most likely to be impaired by a failure of the government to pay interest or principal on the debt immediately

after the deadline - dropped sharply in an indication that investors were again willing to buy them.

Democrats are looking at other options to resolve the standoff.

Biden said on Tuesday that Democrats might weaken a long-standing rule, known as the filibuster, which requires 60 votes to advance most legislation in the 100-seat Senate.

But that idea seemed unlikely to succeed, as a key centrist, Senator Joe Manchin, said he would not support it.

Republicans have already used the filibuster requirement to block two previous attempts to raise the debt ceiling.

Reconciliation can be a long process, sometimes involving all-night sessions, but McConnell said on Wednesday that Republicans would support steps to speed it up.

Republicans had been expected to block the bill that was up for a vote on Wednesday, which suspended the debt limit until December 2022, after the midterm elections that will determine which party controls Congress

The U.S. Capitol building on Capitol Hill, seen during sunset in Washington, U.S., September 30, 2021. REUTERS/Elizabeth Frantz

for the next two years.

It was not clear when the Senate would meet to consider the bill, which has already been passed by the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives.



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WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

CORONAVIRUS DIARY

10/06/2021



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Community Town Hall Meeting



This coming Friday afternoon October 8th Congressman Al Green will come to our TV studio to participate in a town hall meeting.

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and the fact that we are facing possible legislation in Texas to try and redraw the voting districts, are just a couple of the issues we will discuss.

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The Democratic party is very worried that the population of

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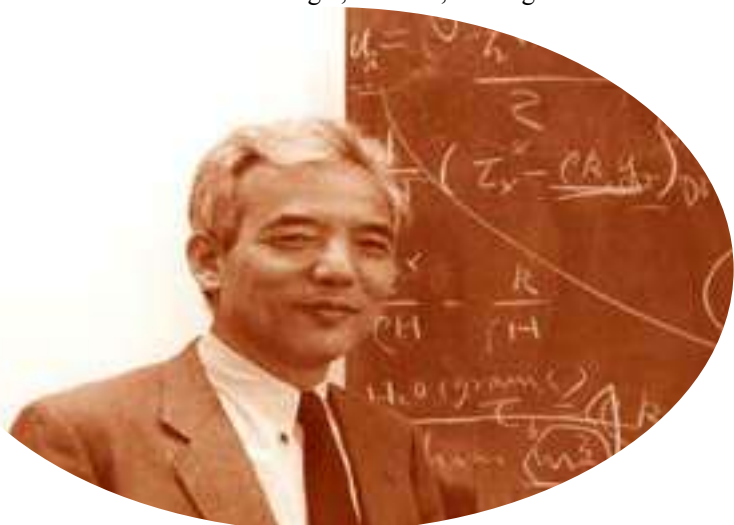
Editor's Choice



List, 53, said the academy caught up with him while on vacation in Amsterdam with his wife, who in the past had liked to joke that somebody might be calling him from Sweden. "But today we didn't even make the joke and certainly didn't anticipate this - and then Sweden appears on my phone... it was a very special moment that I will never forget," he said, dialling into the media



German scientist Benjamin List, who shares the 2021 Nobel Prize in Chemistry together with David MacMillan for the development of asymmetric organocatalysis, celebrates with well-wishers at the Max-Planck-Institute for Coal Research in Muelheim an der Ruhr, Germany. REUTERS/Wolfgang Rattay



Hasselmann, along with Japanese-born American Syukuro Manabe (pictured) and Italian Giorgio Parisi won the 2021 Nobel Prize in Physics for work that helps understand complex physical systems such as Earth's changing climate. Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory/NOAA



Klaus Hasselmann celebrates with his wife Susanne and daughter Annette after winning the 2021 Nobel Prize in Physics, at his home in Hamburg, Germany. REUTERS/Fabian Bimmer



Joint winner of the Nobel Prize for Physics, Italian scientist Giorgio Parisi makes a toast with colleagues in Rome after the announcement. Parisi, who dialled into the media briefing announcing the winners, was asked for his message to world leaders due to meet for U.N. climate change talks in Scotland. REUTERS/Remo Casilli



"I think it is very urgent that we take real and very strong decisions and we move at a very strong pace," said the 73-year-old Nobel laureate, who works at Sapienza University of Rome. REUTERS/Remo Casilli

‘A Few Mutations Away’: The Threat of a Vaccine-Proof Variant



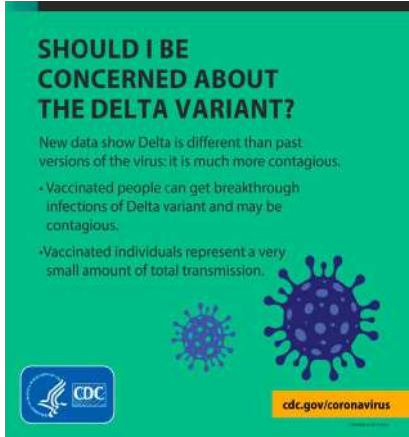
Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

July 30, 2021 -- The CDC Director Rochelle Walensky, MD, made a dire prediction during a media briefing this week that, if we weren't already living within the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic, would sound more like a pitch for a movie about a dystopian future.

"For the amount of virus circulating in this country right now largely among unvaccinated people, the largest concern that we in public health and science are worried about is that the virus...[becomes] a very transmissible virus that has the potential to evade our vaccines in terms of how it protects us from severe disease and death," Walensky told reporters on Tuesday.

A new, more elusive variant could be "just a few mutations away," she said.

"That's a very prescient comment," Lewis Nelson, MD, professor and clinical chair of emergency medicine and chief of the Division of Medical Toxicology at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School in Newark, tells Medscape Medical News.



"We've gone through a few mutations already that have been named, and each one of them gets a little more transmissible," he says. "That's normal, natural selection and what you would expect to happen as viruses mutate from one strain to another."

"What we've mostly seen this virus do is evolve to become more infectious," says Stuart Ray, MD. "That is the remarkable feature of Delta — that it is so infectious."

He says that the SARS-CoV-2 has evolved largely as expected, at least so far. "The potential for this virus to mutate has been something that has been a concern from early on."

"The viral evolution is a bit like a ticking clock. The more we allow infections to occur, the more likely changes will occur. When we have lots of people infected, we give more chances to the virus to diversify and then adapt to selective pressures," says Ray, vice-chair of medicine for data integrity and analytics and professor in the Division of Infectious Diseases at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore, Maryland.



"The problem is if the virus changes

BUSINESS

in such a way that the spike protein — which the antibodies from the vaccine are directed against — are no longer effective at binding and destroying the virus, and the virus escapes immune surveillance," Nelson says.

If this occurs, he says, "we will have an ineffective vaccine, essentially. And we'll be back to where we were last March with a brand-new disease."

Technology to the Rescue?

The flexibility of mRNA vaccines is one potential solution. These vaccines could be more easily and quickly adapted to respond to a new, more vaccine-elusive variant.

"That's absolutely reassuring," Nelson says. For example, if a mutation changes the spike protein and vaccines no longer recognize it, a manufacturer could identify the new protein and incorporate that in a new mRNA vaccine.

"The problem is that some people are not taking the current vaccine," he adds. "I'm not sure what is going to make them take the next vaccine."

ple, from getting sick with it," he says. "That's why it's so important people should get immunized and wear masks."

Both Nelson and Ray point out that it is in the best interest of the virus to evolve to be more transmissible and spread to more people. In contrast, a virus that causes people to get so sick that they isolate or die, thus halting transmission, works against viruses surviving evolutionarily.

Some viruses also mutate to become milder over time, but that has not been the case with SARS-CoV-2, Ray says.

Mutations Not the Only Concern

Viruses have another mechanism that produces new strains, and it works even more quickly than mutations. Recombination, as it's known, can occur when a person is infected with two different strains of the same virus. If the two versions enter the same cell, the viruses can swap genetic material and produce a third, altogether different strain.

Recombination has already been seen with influenza strains, where H and N genetic segments are swapped to yield H1N1, H1N2, and H3N2 versions of the flu, for example.

"In the early days of SARS-CoV-2 there was so little diversity that recombination did not matter," Ray says. However, there are now distinct lineages of the virus circulating globally. If two of these lineages swap segments "this would make a very new viral sequence in one step without having to mutate to gain those differences."

"The more diverse the strains that are circulating, the bigger a possibility this is," Ray says.



Protected, for Now

Walensky's sober warning came at the same time the CDC released new guidance calling for the wearing of masks indoors in schools and in any location in the country where



Nothing Appears Certain

When asked how likely a new strain of SARS-CoV-2 could emerge that gets around vaccine protection, Nelson says, "I think [what] we've learned so far there is no way to predict anything" about this pandemic.

"The best way to prevent the virus from mutating is to prevent hosts, peo-



COVID-19 cases surpass 50 people per 100,000, also known as substantial or high transmission areas.

On a positive note, Walensky says: "Right now, fortunately, we are not there. The vaccines operate really well in protecting us from severe disease and death." (Courtesy <https://www.webmd.com/v>)

COMMUNITY

Genetic Testing Firm Shows Specific Blood Types Are Less Likely To Contract COVID-19



The research found that individuals with type O blood are between 9 per cent and 18 per cent less likely than individuals with other blood types to have tested positive for the virus. (Photo/ Handout)

KEY POINTS

The company in April launched a study using the millions of profiles in its DNA database to shed light on the role genetics play in the disease

Preliminary results from more than 750,000 participants suggests type O blood is especially protective against the coronavirus

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Research from genetic testing giant 23andMe found differences in a gene that influences a person's blood type can affect a person's susceptibility to Covid-19.

Scientists have been looking at genetic factors to try to determine why some people who contract the new coronavirus experience no symptoms, while others become gravely ill. In April, 23andMe launched a study that sought to use the millions of profiles in its DNA database to shed light on the role genetics play in the disease.

Preliminary results from more than 750,000 participants suggests type O blood is especially protective against Sars-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, the company said on Monday. The findings echo other research that

has indicated a link between variations in the ABO gene and Covid-19. Many other groups, including 23andMe competitor Ancestry, are combing the genome to help make sense of the virus. It is known that factors such as age and underlying health conditions can determine how people fare once they've contracted Covid-19.

But those factors alone don't explain the wide diversity of symptoms, or why some people contract the disease and others don't. Studying the genetics of the people who are more susceptible to Sars-CoV-2 could help identify and protect those more at risk, as well as help speed treatment and drug development. Several other studies looking at both severity of illness and susceptibility to disease have also suggested blood type plays a role.



A researcher works in a lab at Singapore's Duke-NUS Medical School, which is developing a way to track genetic changes that speed testing of vaccines. (Photo: Reuters)

"There have also been some reports of links between Covid-19, blood clotting, and cardiovascular disease," said Adam Auton, lead researcher on the 23andMe study. "These reports provided some hints about which genes might be relevant."

The 23andMe study, which looked at susceptibility rather than severity of illness, included 10,000 participants who told the company they had Covid-19. The research found that individuals with type O blood are between 9 per cent and 18 per cent less likely than individuals with other blood types to have tested positive for the virus. However, there was little difference in susceptibility among other blood types, the study found.

When the researchers adjusted the data to account for factors like age and pre-existing illnesses, as well as when it restricted the data to only those with high probability of exposure like health care workers, the findings were the same. Auton said that while this evidence is compelling, there is still a long way to go.



"It's early days; even with these sample sizes, it might not be enough to find genetic associations," he said. "We're not the only group looking at this, and

ultimately the scientific community may need to pool their resources to really address questions surrounding the links between genetics and Covid-19."

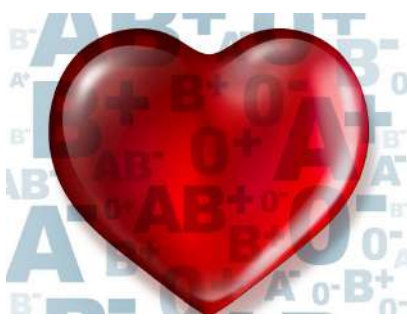
Research published last week prior to peer review suggested blood type may play a role in the severity of patients' reactions to Sars-CoV-2. That study looked at the genes of more than 1,600 patients in Italy and Spain who experienced respiratory failure and found that having type A blood was linked to a 50 per cent increase in the likelihood a patient would require a ventilator. An earlier Chinese study turned up similar results regarding a person's susceptibility to Covid-19. (Courtesy <https://www.scmp.com/>)

Related

How your blood type could influence your risk of getting COVID-19

Some people are more at risk of getting COVID-19. More men seem to get the virus than women. People between 30 and 79 years old seem to get the virus more than people in their 20s. And people in their 20s get it more than teens and children.

All that said, there's still a lot we don't know about the virus and risk factors, which is why researchers are working around the clock to get this virus figured out. And the good news is, they're uncovering more information every day. But some of the information that's coming to light is surprising.



People with this blood type may have a bigger risk

A recent study from researchers in

China shows that people with type A blood have a significantly higher risk of COVID-19 than people with other blood types.

The study included data from 2,173 people with COVID-19 who were admitted to three hospitals in Wuhan and Shenzhen. Researchers looked at blood type distribution among the general population in those areas and compared it to blood type distribution among people with COVID-19. Here's what they found. People with type A blood had the highest risk. People with type B blood had the second-highest risk. People with type AB blood had the third-highest risk. And people with type O blood had the lowest risk.



Now, this study is preliminary. It hasn't been peer-reviewed, and it's far from the last word on the matter. But it appears that having type A blood could put you at an elevated risk for COVID-19. And actually, the connection between blood type and viral susceptibility has been demonstrated before. Blood type is determined by the antigens (molecules) on the surface of blood cells. Certain viruses require certain antigens to latch on to. Norovirus, the virus that causes stomach flu, is one example. It affects people with type B blood less because that blood doesn't have the antigens it needs to do its dirty work. There may be something similar happening with COVID-19, but it's far too early to know for sure. (Courtesy <https://easy-healthoptions.com/>)

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