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Inside C2

# Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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## Southwest cancels thousands more U.S. flights on weather woes

Dec 27 (Reuters) - Southwest Airlines Co (LUV.N) on Tuesday led U.S. airline cancellations again as the low-cost carrier struggled with harsh winter weather that grounded planes and left some workers unable to tend to jets, disrupting holiday travel for many.

The carrier had canceled 2,589 flights as of Tuesday 2.25 pm ET or roughly two-thirds of its schedule, representing 86% of all U.S. airline cancellations, according to tracking website FlightAware.

Additionally, Southwest called off about 2,500 flights scheduled for Wednesday and over 1,000 flights from its Thursday schedule.

Shares of Southwest fell as much as 6.3% to a two-month low of \$33.81.

The airline's cancellations on Tuesday were 30 times more than those of Spirit Airlines (SAVE.N), the carrier with the second-most cancellations.

An arctic blast and a massive winter storm dubbed Elliott swept over much of the United States in the lead-up to the Christmas holiday weekend, forcing Southwest to scrap more than 12,000 flights since Friday.

Michigan governor sentenced to 16 years in prison  
The company has a more aggressive schedule than most other U.S. airlines and tighter turnaround times to accommodate its network that connects vast swathes of the country.

It earns most of its profits from flying domestically and unlike other large U.S. carriers, Southwest relies more on point-to-point service instead of operating out of large hubs. That leaves its staff vulnerable to being stranded in case of disruptions.

The official POTUS handle for U.S. President Joe Biden tweeted on Tuesday that his administration was working to ensure airlines were "held accountable."

Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul called on the U.S. Transportation Department, which is scrutinizing Southwest's cancellations, to adopt rules that would ensure airlines provide relief to those who experience cancellations and long delays not related to inclement weather.

Reuters Graphics Reuters Graphics  
Reuters Graphics Reuters Graphics  
"We expect Southwest to call out the impact (from the storm) as it was worse than the industry and likely hurt earnings more than a 'normal' storm,"



[1/3] People wait in long lines for the Southwest Airlines check-in counters at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport where flight delays and cancellations stranded passengers in Phoenix, Arizona, U.S. December 26, 2022. Joe Rondone/USA Today Network via REUTERS/File Photo



Cowen analyst Helene Becker said in a note.

"Other airlines likely had manageable cancellations and delays, and actually appear to have recovered (in time to get everyone home)."

Staff could not stay outdoors for long due to the risk of frostbite, crimping Southwest's ability to fly, said Randy Barnes, president of TWU Local 555, a union that represents the carrier's ramp, operations, provisioning and freight agents.

"Southwest is using outdated technology and processes, really from the 90s, that can't keep up with the network complexity today," said Casey Murray, president of Southwest Airlines Pilots Association.

The weather has thrown Southwest's staffing into chaos since Friday, prompting its chief executive, Bob Jordan, to promise efforts in upgrading the company's systems, according to a memo reported earlier by CNN and confirmed to Reuters by Southwest.

"We had aircraft that were available, but the process of matching up those crew members with the aircraft could not be handled by our technology," Southwest said, adding crew schedulers had to match planes with staff manually which is "extraordinarily difficult."

In total, airlines have canceled more than 5,000 U.S. flights for Tuesday and Wednesday.

Shares in other U.S. carriers such as Alaska Air Group (ALK.N), JetBlue Airways Corp (JBLU.O) and Spirit Airlines fell about 1% to 2%.

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# WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

12/27/2022

## China Will End Covid-19 Restrictions For International Travelers



Chinese top health authorities have just announced that China will drop the quarantine requirement for all passengers arriving from outside of the country's borders starting on Jan. 8, 2023.

China has also scrapped all other restrictive Covid-19 measures for travelers, including quarantines for positive patients and contact tracing.

After the news was released, it was warmly welcomed by people around the world which means that the gate of China will be opened again after three years.

Although the Zero-Covid policy in the past three years has slowed down a large number of deaths of epidemic patients in China, the country has indeed paid a heavy price at the economic level.

We hope that this opening up will bring a rapid resumption of flights and reduce the price of tickets and that many tourists will visit China soon.

All over the world people need to work together and continue to fight against this terrible virus and work hard for the best health for everybody.



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**Southern DAILY** Make Today Different

## Editor's Choice



Olha reacts during a funeral ceremony for her husband Volodymyr Yezhov, Ukrainian serviceman and game designer for games S.T.A.L.K.E.R. and Cossacks, who was recently killed in a fight against Russian troops near the town of Bakhmut, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Kyiv, Ukraine. REUTERS/Valentyn Ogirenko



Ukrainian soldiers hold their mobile phones in a shelter powered by a generator, as Russia's attack on Ukraine continues, during intense shelling in Bakhmut, Ukraine. REUTERS/Clodagh Kilcoyne



Republican Ohio U.S. Senate candidate J.D. Vance arrives with his wife Usha to declare victory at his midterm party in Columbus, Ohio. REUTERS/Gaelen Morse



A man walks beside ice formed by the spray of Lake Erie waves which covered a restaurant during a winter storm in Hamburg, New York. REUTERS/Lindsey DeDario



People sit inside the Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere as they eat during the traditional Christmas lunch for the needy and poor, in Rome, Italy. REUTERS/Yara Nardi



The moon and a statue are seen during a lunar eclipse in San Salvador, El Salvador. REUTERS/Jose Cabezas

# The Return Of Measles



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

Measles — declared eradicated in the U.S. in 2000 — has roared back at a record pace this year.

**Why it matters:** Most Americans have no firsthand experience with measles and that lack of familiarity, along with the online success of the anti-vaccine movement, is giving a deadly but easily preventable virus an opening to spread.

**UPDATE:**

- 695 confirmed cases of measles in 22 states.
- More than 70 new confirmed cases reported in just the past week.
- 5 states reporting ongoing outbreaks as of Monday (at least 3 cases in one place counts as an outbreak).
- We may be a victim of our own success in squelching what used to be a ubiquitous virus that is extremely contagious.
- According to the CDC, prior to 1963, between 3 to 4 million were infected each year and nearly all children got measles by the time they were 15 years old.
- A CDC spokesperson tells Axios that among reported cases, an estimated 400 to 500 people died annually prior to widespread vaccination, 48,000 were hospitalized and 1,000 suffered encephalitis (swelling of the brain) from measles.
- Now, due in large part to vaccination efforts that began in 1963, most Americans

have no experience with the virus.



•Parents may be fooled into thinking that measles is a relatively mild disease, similar to the flu, and think vaccination is unnecessary or not a priority.

•This is not only wrong, but it could have deadly consequences.

•Parents may think that many vaccine-preventable diseases are mild, but there's no way to tell how serious a disease may be for a child," CDC spokesman Jason McDonald tells Axios via email. But measles can be particularly hazardous for babies and young children, he says.

•From 2001-2013, 28% of children younger than 5 years old who had measles had to be treated in the hospital, McDonald said, referring to relatively small outbreaks related to measles patients who traveled to the U.S. from areas where the disease is still active.

"Some children develop pneumonia (a serious lung infection) or lifelong brain damage."

**Different vaccine-hesitant communities** added together are causing vaccination rates to fall below effective immunity levels, Anthony Fauci, who leads the National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, tells Axios.

**"It is kind of like all of the stars are in the right place for the disaster we're seeing now because we're having multiple factors combining together to give us these outbreaks,"** Fauci says.

The situation is worrying enough in New York State alone that the CDC issued a stark warning Wednesday: "The longer these outbreaks continue, the greater the chance measles will again get a sustained foothold in the United States."



**The bottom line:** One relatively morbid source of hope, however, are the widely-reported health impacts from the ongoing outbreaks, with children in intensive care units and an El Al Airlines flight attendant in a coma.

"I think unfortunately the best motivation... is that we're having these outbreaks and people are really getting seriously ill," Fauci says. "Those are the things that are going to jolt people into reconsidering this." (Courtesy Axios.com)

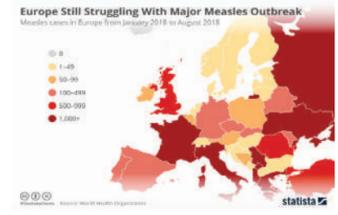
**Related**

**U.S. Measles Cases Are "Accelerating" Amid A "Global Crisis"**

Measles cases in the U.S. jumped last week, with 90 new confirmed cases, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced Monday. The global statistics are also grim, with a 300% increase in preliminary data for the first 3 months of this year compared with last year.

**Why it matters:** The extremely contagious virus, for which there is a safe and effective vaccine, shows no signs of slowing despite efforts by public health authorities to

combat the spread of misinformation with strong measures. International health officials are becoming increasingly concerned about simultaneous, growing outbreaks in multiple countries.



**By the numbers:** CDC spokesperson Jason McDonald tells Axios: "It appears the outbreak is accelerating. 61 of the 90 cases reported this week had rash onset in April."

•This week, CDC reports 555 confirmed cases of measles in 20 states so far in 2019. The previous week showed 465 cases in 19 states.

•This is the second-greatest number of cases reported in the U.S. since measles was considered eliminated in 2000, and it's only mid-April.

**Between the lines:** The national average vaccination coverage in kindergarten children is at a level (94.3% for 2 doses of the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine for the 2017-2018 school year) consistent with the "herd immunity" necessary to prevent a nationwide outbreak. However, pockets of community resistance to the vaccine are allowing the virus to make inroads, experts have told Axios.

•Globally, the World Health Organization and UNICEF announced Monday that provisional data also shows that in 170 countries there have been more than 112,000 cases so far this year, compared with the numbers from all of last year, which was 28,124 cases from 163 countries.

**What they're saying:** Peter Hotez, professor and dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine, tells Axios:

"The year 2019 may be remembered for the return of measles to America, almost 20 years after it was eliminated in the U.S. We're reaching record levels in terms of numbers of cases and outbreaks, with all of them largely engineered by the anti-vaccine lobby. We now have children in intensive

care units."

"If our nation is serious about stopping future measles epidemics, in the coming years it will be essential for us to begin dismantling the anti-vaccine media empire now dominating the internet and social media and e-commerce sites, together with shutting down the non-medical vaccine exemptions currently allowed across most of the U.S."



The heads of the WHO and UNICEF write in an opinion piece for CNN that there's a "global crisis." They implore governments, medical professionals and others to help provide vaccines to lower-income countries and to take a stronger stand against misinformation globally. Per their op-ed:

"Ultimately, there is no 'debate' to be had about the profound benefits of vaccines. We know they are safe, and we know they work. More than 20 million lives have been saved through measles vaccination since the year 2000 alone."

"But children are paying the price for complacency. It will take long-term efforts, political commitment and continuous investment — in vaccine access, in service quality and in trust — to ensure we are, and remain, protected together."

Meanwhile, Madagascar health officials say there have been 1,200 deaths amid more than 117,000 cases in the small, impoverished nation since their measles outbreak began in September, per AP. The country's vaccination rate is only 58%, but it's primarily due to lack of resources instead of vaccination distrust, the report adds.

Plus, the Wall Street Journal reports there's growing evidence that besides the worry of possible serious immediate complications, the virus may also cause a longer-term risk of dampening people's immune systems from responding to other diseases for 2-5 years after measles. (Courtesy Axios.com)

# COMMUNITY

## COVID Immunity Levels Can Be Measured In 15 minutes

### Houston Startup Develops Ground Breaking COVID Immunity Test

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



A team of researchers at Brevitest has developed a quick, finger-stick blood test to determine immunity to COVID-19, using a small, desktop device they invented that conducts the test using robotic technology with proprietary testing cards used to analyze the blood samples. Photographed at their offices, Monday, Nov. 29, 2021, in Houston. (Photo/Mark Mulligan, Houston Chronicle / Staff photographer)

A Houston startup has developed a revolutionary COVID-19 test that can measure immunity levels and determine whether or when people need a new vaccine or booster to protect themselves from the disease.

The instant test could be widely available soon, if the Food and Drug Administration grants the new device fast-track approval. Knowing personal immunity levels could become increasingly important in the face of new variants, like omicron, when people need to decide whether or when they need a new vaccine or booster shot.

The affordable, first-of-its-kind fingerstick blood test is offered by Brevitest, a company developed at Fannin Innovation Studios, a life sciences incubator in River Oaks. Researchers invented a new method for measuring antibodies, using cloud computing to process results and delivering them in 15 minutes to determine if an immune system needs a boost.

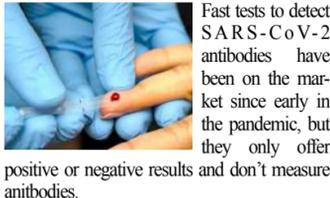
Doctors, companies and public health officials can use the tests to determine the COVID immunity levels for individuals, workforces or entire communities so they can employ more targeted strategies for slowing the disease. Since the technology is protected by patents, Brevitest can license the unique device and potentially become one of the most significant startups to emerge from Houston's life sciences community in a decade.



Leo Linbeck III, the CEO and co-founder of Brevitest, said his company's technology research that has determined how many antibodies per unit of blood people need to fight off or minimize a coronavirus infection. The new test lets people know where they stand, whether from a vaccination or natural immunity to determine if they need a booster or difference vaccine Brevitest can adapt the test to detect antibodies for any variant, including omicron. Once approved, the company could begin deploying the device across the country within a few months to carry out millions of tests a week.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — worried about vaccines wearing off — recently authorized COVID-19 booster shots six months after vaccination, prioritizing those over 65 years old. But individual needs vary widely and some people lose antibodies quicker than others.

"Everyone's biology is different, and the data seems to indicate that it could be anywhere from three months to 12 months when you see the antibody level begin to wane," Linbeck told me. "That's particularly problematic for older people who tend to have less of an immune response or those who are immunosuppressed or immunocompromised."



Doctors who have patients with weak immune systems have relied on a precise blood test called an enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay, or ELISA, that are currently done at central laboratories. But those results can take several days to return.

"We're trying to build a point-of-care ELISA because the way we look at it, either you can have accuracy that will take time or you can have speed, and then you lose accuracy," explained

Dr. Dev Chatterjee, a co-founder and co-inventor. "The question we asked ourselves is, is there a way we can marry the two?"

The Brevitest device allows a technician to place a small blood sample on a custom-designed cartridge, which is inserted into a shoebox-sized device that produces digital diagnostic data, the same as the precision test.

The device sends the data to the cloud, where it is processed using proprietary software Linbeck wrote. Patients receive an alert and can access the results with their phones, which also allows them to compare their result with the latest COVID immunity data.

The new company can make a profit at the same \$43 reimbursement rate insurance companies pay for a central lab test, Linbeck said. Brevitest is offering tests at its lab in Houston.



Until recently, researchers were unsure how many antibodies someone needed to fend off the virus. But that changed in September when the journal Nature Medicine published a new study that used the World Health Organization standard to measure antibody levels and showed a correlation between antibody levels and infection rates.

Healthy people can use the test to determine if they need a booster or should wait a few months to take full advantage of their vaccine or illness-induced antibodies.

"There's some evidence that if you wait longer and you let your antibody count drop, when you get that vaccine (booster), you get a bigger bump. You get more antibody production than you would if you had taken it while you still have active antibody response," he added.

Linbeck, Chatterjee and co-inventor Dr. Atul Varadhachary founded Brevitest in 2013 to create an office-based blood testing system that would generate precision blood test results quicker. The National Institutes of Health provided a grant during the test's early development, and the Centers for Disease Control asked Brevitest to develop an Ebola test during the 2014 outbreak.



**Aquinas Companies CEO Leo Linbeck works on code for a BreviTest analyzer, one of the startup companies helped by Fannin Innovation Studio which helps researchers and scientists with life science product develop-**

ment July 7, 2016, in Houston.

(Photo/ James Nielsen / Houston Chronicle) Chatterjee and Varadhachary said the scientific challenge was far more formidable than expected. Designing a new cartridge that prepared the blood for scanning in a new way took years. Linbeck, an engineer, worked on reliability and durability to meet exacting medical standards.

"Once you actually get down to developing for the real world versus creating something for the lab, there is a whole ocean of problems that you have to solve," Chatterjee explained.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, the company refocused on measuring SARS-CoV-2 antibodies.

Brevitest is one of four life science start-ups spun out of Fannin Innovation Studio, Linbeck's biotechnology development company. He is best known as the executive chairman of the Linbeck Group, a construction company founded by his grandfather that built many of the structures at the Texas Medical Center.

Linbeck and Varadhachary started Fannin to commercialize discoveries made at TMC. But Brevitest was Fannin's homegrown effort to address the lengthy delay in returning accurate blood test results, a goal of many companies.



**A team at Brevitest has developed a quick, finger-stick blood test to determine a person's immunity to Covid-19 using a small, desktop device they invented that conducts the test using robotic technology with proprietary testing cards used to analyze the blood samples. Photographed at their offices, Monday, Nov. 29, 2021, in Houston. (Photo/Mark Mulligan, Houston Chronicle / Staff photographer)**

The most famous attempt to develop a rapid diagnostic device is TheraNas, a Silicon Valley-based company that promised a full blood workup from a tiny vial using a handheld device. Linbeck, Chatterjee and Varadhachary say TheraNas's claims never made any sense to them, and the company's founder, Elizabeth Holmes, is in federal court this week fighting federal fraud charges. In contrast to TheraNas, Brevitest only claims to conduct one test per fingerstick and will release its testing data for outside review, Chatterjee said.

Brevitest will never replace the broad tests best done by a central lab, for things like annual physicals, because they require a large amount

of blood and the big machines are more efficient, Linbeck said. But the team foresees doctors and clinics using Brevitest to routinely monitor patients with compromised immune systems or to track specific biomarkers for cancer and other infectious diseases.

Most breakthrough research in health care and medical devices never makes it out of the lab because investors lack the patience required to bring a product to market.



**Leo Linbeck III, left, founder and chairman of Fannin Innovation Studio and managing partner Atul Varadhachary, right, develop medical technologies along with their portfolio companies like Procyron. Wednesday, Nov. 12, 2014, in Houston. (Photo/Marie D. De Jesus, Staff / Houston Chronicle)**

The company's strategy of licensing bio-medical discoveries and gathering researchers under the studio's umbrella to keep administrative overhead low until they had a commercial product. Linbeck said the investor community needs to have more conversations about the best way to finance life science startups.

"There's a lot of misconceptions about the way that this stuff works," he said. "Having been down in the weeds, I have a greater level of humility and respect around just how difficult this is. The human body doesn't like to be tinkered with, which is great news for us from an evolutionary standpoint, but it's not so great from a medical innovation development standpoint." From an investor perspective, Linbeck said the most significant challenge was finding the right people to manage the transition from the research lab to a for-profit company. Fannin recruits and trains people with medical and life science skills who are interested in entrepreneurship.

"This is about making a big pile of money because that's also what will sustain us over the long haul," Linbeck said. "That means that we get involved early, and it takes longer, but when the payoff happens, I think it'll be really-big multiples."

Energy projects and technology investments can pay off big, too, and take less time. But Linbeck said he doesn't mind the wait to build a business that saves lives.

"Anything really important and high impact takes a decade," he said. "It just does." (Courtesy houstonchronicle.com)