

# OPINION

editor@dailyastorian.com



# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873

KARI BORGEN  
Publisher

JIM VAN NOSTRAND  
Editor

JEREMY FELDMAN  
Circulation Manager

DEBRA BLOOM  
Business Manager

JOHN D. BRUIJN  
Production Manager

CARL EARL  
Systems Manager

## OUR VIEW

# Simple advice — get a flu shot

## CDC, states both urge preventive action

It's time to get your flu shot — if you haven't already. You owe it to yourself, and to protect the people around you.

Influenza is a highly contagious respiratory illness most commonly spread through coughing and sneezing. While most people who contract it experience no more than fever, chills, aches, cough and congestion, it can be serious — and even fatal.

The federal Centers for Disease Control says people should be getting vaccinated by the end of October. But its medical staff add that getting vaccinated later, however, can still be beneficial and vaccination should continue to be offered throughout flu season, even into January or later.

In fact, writing in the New York Times, columnist Jane Brody recently reported that November is still a great time to get your shot.

“Although there are some cases of flu in October and November in the United States, flu season here doesn't usually get going full speed until December, peaking in most years in February and usually ending by April,” she said in a Nov. 5 column.

Dr. Michael T. Osterholm, director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota, told Brody that “immunity induced by the flu vaccine, which is rarely greater than 60 percent to begin with, tends to wane by 20 percent a



The influenza virus has not hit too hard yet this season, but health officials urge residents to get a flu shot.

month, leaving those who got their shot in August or September with less than desirable protection by the time they're exposed to a variant of flu virus their body doesn't recognize.”

Osterholm said that “since 95 percent of flu outbreaks start in mid-December, it's best to get the flu shot in early to mid-November.”

The CDC estimates that flu has resulted in between 9.3 million and 49 million illnesses each year in the United States since 2010. That's resulted in between 140,000 and 960,000 hospitalizations each year since.

Information about fatalities, especially about deaths of children, make for grim reading on the CDC website. *Time*

magazine reported that flu and its complications killed almost 80,000 people in the U.S. last year, including 180 children. That's the highest flu death toll in four decades.

### Tips

So here are some tips:

- Everyone six months of age or older needs a flu vaccine.
- It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies that protect against flu to develop in the body
- Children 6 months through 8 years of age who need two doses of vaccine to be protected should start the vaccination process sooner; if it is their first vaccination, the two doses must be given at least four weeks apart.

### MORE ONLINE

For definitive details about all aspects of flu shots, go to [bit.ly/flu-questions](http://bit.ly/flu-questions)

In addition to getting vaccinated, the CDC states something that should be obvious, but is worth repeating: You can take everyday preventive actions like staying away from sick people and washing your hands to reduce the spread of germs.

And if you do contract flu-like symptoms, get medical help. If you are sick with flu, stay home from work or school to prevent spreading flu to others.

That latter point is a key.

Back in September, our popular Point of View feature offered quotes from three North Coast residents about their views on flu shots. Respondent Terisa Misner summed it up best, noting she took care of a senior citizen and could easily give her the flu. “If there is a shot that can prevent something, and there's a high percent of positive result, then that's a definite yes,” the Svensen resident added.

We agree.

Clatsop County Public Health is a good starting point for anyone seeking more information. The agency's staff at (503) 325-8500 is eager to help.

Many pharmacies offer flu shots for free and many insurances have only a very small co-pay.

This kind of preventative medicine is an investment in your own health, and that of family, friends and co-workers — in fact, everyone you encounter in your daily life.

If there is a small cost, it is money well spent.

# Guardian drops explosive surprise about Manafort, Assange

Did you hear that?

At roughly 9:30 on Tuesday morning, a bombshell exploded over America's already cacophonous 24/7 news cycle. The Guardian reported that President Trump's convicted-felon 2016 campaign manager, Paul Manafort, held secret face-to-face meetings with WikiLeaks' Julian Assange — the conduit for Russian-hacked emails that politically damaged Trump's opponent Hillary Clinton — at the same time he was assuming control over the then-GOP front runner's operation in Trump Tower.

The report by a highly reputable, Pulitzer-winning news organization — based upon sources who witnessed and reported on Manafort visits to the Ecuadorian embassy in London, where Assange has been holed up as a fugitive for years — threatens to demolish Trump's longstanding claim that his campaign didn't collude in the release of the stolen documents.

The stunning new report also suddenly makes sense of a flurry of bizarre developments in the previous 24 hours as special counsel Robert Mueller's long, ongoing probe of Trump's 2016 campaign, possible collusion and a subsequent cover-up comes out of its self-imposed quiet period for the recent midterm elections.

It may answer the huge question raised by Monday night's shock report that Manafort — who, convicted of eight felony counts and facing a raft of other charges involving money laundering and conspiracy, pleaded guilty this summer and promised to tell Mueller what he knows — now stands accused of instead telling a new series of lies to prosecutors. Pundits wondered what secret was so big that Manafort — who surely dreams of an (impeachment-worthy) pardon from Trump and fears a polonium sandwich from Vladimir Putin — would keep lying.

This may be it.

The Guardian report and Manafort's worsening legal dilemma also sheds light on Trump's increasingly frantic tweets, including a series blasted out on Twitter early Tuesday morning that “Mueller is a conflicted prosecutor gone rogue ...” adding: “The Fake News Media builds Bob Mueller up as a Saint, when in actuality he is the exact opposite. He is doing TREMENDOUS damage to our Criminal Justice System, where he is only looking at one side and not the other.”

Saint or no saint, Mueller may be closing in on Team Trump's number — and possibly



Paul Manafort talks to reporters in 2016 on the floor of the Republican National Convention in Cleveland.

the president himself. The Guardian report certainly aligns with a flurry of news in recent days that Mueller's team is intensely interested in whether certain associates of Trump — including the veteran political dirty trickster Roger Stone as well as journalistic conspiracy monger Jerome Corsi — had insider information on what documents WikiLeaks possessed and when they'd be released. There are also reports of a secret — and highly controversial — U.S. effort to prosecute WikiLeaks' Assange.

But Tuesday's report also — and this is important to note — hasn't yet been matched by other leading news outlets. And the Guardian article has also drawn vehement denials from WikiLeaks, which continues to insist there were no meetings between Manafort and Assange (Manafort's lawyers have made no comment yet). There will certainly be pressure on both the news organization and its sources, which seem to include Ecuadorian intelligence officials, to defend such an explosive story.

The Guardian is reporting that the 69-year-old Manafort met with Assange in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London on at least three separate occasions — in 2013, 2015 and again in the late winter or early spring of 2016. That last alleged meeting is especially critical because it would have taken place right before a) Trump all but clinched the GOP presidential nomination b) Manafort became the out-of-left-field choice

as Trump's new campaign manager and c) WikiLeaks began releasing unflattering emails and other documents hacked from the Democratic National Committee — an operation which, Mueller has since charged, was led by Russian operatives.

Manafort — who earned millions of dollars representing the pro-Russia political party in Ukraine, working closely with an aide Mueller charges has ties to Putin's intelligence network — also convened a now infamous June 2016 confab at Trump Tower with Donald Trump Jr., Jared Kushner and Russian sources with links to Putin's government who'd promised “dirt” on Clinton and wanted to gauge Team Trump's willingness to lift sanctions on their homeland.

It all smells rather collusion-y, especially when this new Manafort-Assange bombshell gets lobbed into this flaming dumpster. That's really important because “No collusion” has been a kind of warped Zen mantra for Trump during his 21 months in the White House, two soothing words that he's relied on to make the stress of the Mueller probe temporarily go away. And that's because even America's king of denial understands deep down that any hard proof of collusion could be the beginning of the end of Trump.

America stands at a place that it's never been in its 242 years of independence. Our 1787 Constitution did provide us with one deeply flawed tool — impeachment — to deal with un-spelled-out “high crimes and

misdemeanors” by a president. But there's no clear mechanism to determine if a presidential election was stolen, nor any real plan for how to restore confidence in democracy if that actually happens. The question of whether this electronic thievery by a rival world power, coupled with its support for a spurious social media campaign, changed the outcome of a 2016 presidential election decided by less than 100,000 votes — and what role Trump and his minions played in all of this — may be resolved by Mueller, or it may be a thing that historians are still debating in the 23rd Century.

History's final judgments may be shaped by two monumental decisions that loom in the coming weeks, if not sooner.

The frantic news of the last day or so only makes it more likely that Trump and his unqualified, handpicked acting attorney general Matthew Whitaker will move — no matter how awkwardly or unconstitutionally — against Mueller. The first step — as suggested by Manafort's refusal to play ball with Mueller — could be a Trump pardon of his former campaign manager, which would trigger the biggest constitutional crisis since the Civil War and all but ensure the president's impeachment when the new Democratic-led House is inaugurated in January.

But equally hard decisions await Mueller — who may or may not, anticipating his dismissal or Trump pardons, have scattered secret indictments or giant breadcrumbs of evidence with state prosecutors in New York — and, more importantly, House Democrats all but certain to be led by a second speakership of Nancy Pelosi.

It seems clear that the Democrats — who found that barely mentioning Trump's impeachment during the midterms was a winning strategy — had a plan to use their newfound committee subpoena powers to investigate the White House and expose its secrets for two years while their ideal 2020 candidate emerged from a secret trap door somewhere.

The problem with that go-slow approach is that the time could soon come when the danger posed to democracy by the illegitimacy of a continuing Trump presidency becomes so great that drastic, outside-the-box, let-the-chips-fall-where-they-may action is required, or there won't really be much of a democracy left to preserve by the 2020 election. This explosive November surprise should force lawmakers to seriously ask themselves: Are we there yet?

Will Bunch is a columnist for *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.