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AAP News

AAP Fellow to lead federal COVID response



Courtesy of Hassan Malik

Editor's note: For the latest news on COVID-19, visit <http://bit.ly/AAPNewsCOVID19>.

Pediatrician David A. Kessler, M.D., J.D., FAAP, has been named chief science officer of COVID response by President-elect Joe Biden.

Dr. Kessler, who has been serving as co-chair of Biden's COVID-19 Advisory Board, is a professor of pediatrics and epidemiology and biostatistics at University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) and served as Food and Drug Administration commissioner from 1990-'97.

"Dr. Kessler has been a pioneer for children in his years in public service, including protecting children from the harms of tobacco and ensuring that medications used in children are safe and effective," AAP President Lee Savio Beers, M.D., FAAP, said in a [news release](#). "As we confront challenges in COVID-19 vaccine distribution, I can think of no one better than Dr. Kessler to ensure that children are included in vaccine trials and that those of us caring for patients during this pandemic have equitable access."

His past work also includes serving as dean of the medical schools at Yale and UCSF and chair of the boards of the Center for Science in the Public Interest and the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation. In the latter role, he helped spearhead a major global effort to make drugs available to millions to end the transmission of mother-to-child HIV-AIDS.

Dr. Kessler is a graduate of Amherst College, the University of Chicago Law School and Harvard Medical School. He was awarded the Public Welfare Medal from the National Academy of Sciences in 2001.

His appointment comes as COVID-19 cases in the U.S. are surging, and death toll is nearing 400,000. Health officials celebrated the approval of two COVID-19 vaccines in December, but vaccine administration has fallen well below projections. Biden has said he is aiming to administer 100 million COVID shots in 100 days.

"We are in a race against time, and we need a comprehensive strategy to quickly contain this virus," Biden said in a [press release](#) Friday. "The individuals announced today will bolster the White House's COVID-19 Response team and play important roles in carrying out our rescue plan and vaccination program. At a time when American families are facing numerous challenges, I know these public servants will do all that is needed to build our nation back better."