

## Preparing for the Next Pandemic



[On this week's \*Path Forward\*](#), a U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation [event series](#), leaders in the health and technology sectors joined U.S. Chamber President and CEO Suzanne Clark to discuss how to prepare for and mitigate future pandemics.

They emphasized deploying rapid testing for novel diseases, improving data sharing, and pushing back against misinformation.

**Rapid testing:** “We can get much better at detecting small clusters of similar infections before they become large epidemics, let alone pandemics, and stopping them in their tracks. To do that, we need a number of tools starting with rapid, point-of-care diagnostics,” explained Dr. Tara O’Toole, executive vice president and senior fellow at In-Q-Tel.

Dr. Rafael Mariano Grossi, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, added, “We designed a program to beef up the equipment, the capabilities of all these labs and institutions that are already linked, to give them the ability to be sharper and faster in the early identification of pathogens.”

**Data sharing:** “Our big failing in this epidemic...has been in data. In America, we have a very fragmented health system. Public health is fragmented by state, county, and local jurisdictions,” said Dr. O’Toole. “And bringing accurate data together in something close to real-time, so that we have situational awareness, we know what’s going on...has been our big Achilles heel. That’s going to need a lot of attention in the future.”

**Fighting misinformation:** “We have made progress in this country, and in this world, based upon evidence. Figuring out what’s really true and what is not,” said Dr. Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health. “To have a circumstance arise where facts often seem to fall in the face of opinion—oftentimes something that turns up in social media—is not a pathway that’s going to be good...Evidence matters.”

**As for this pandemic:** It’s vital that Americans get vaccinated when supplies become available for their group. And don’t forget mask-wearing and social distancing. Doing these will limit the spread of COVID-19 and get our country back to health.

**Learn more:**

- [COVID-19 Vaccines Digital Resource Center](#)
- [Coronavirus Small Business Resource Guide](#) from CO— by U.S. Chamber of Commerce