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Kansas pulls COVID vaccine ads from TV after lawmakers object to calling them safe and effective

Jason Tidd, Topeka Capital-Journal

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The Kansas health agency stopped airing television advertisements promoting the COVID-19 vaccine after some Republican lawmakers took issue with calling the shots safe and effective.

The revelation came during Janet Stanek's confirmation hearing Wednesday before the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee. Stanek is the acting secretary of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.

The same committee pressed Stanek on COVID-19 conspiracy theories at a January meeting. Some members contended the KDHE should be more careful about labeling COVID-19 vaccines as safe and effective.

Sen. Mark Steffen, R-Hutchinson, again raised the issue Wednesday.

"When it comes to the COVID shot ... we talked about the problem that KDHE was basically saying 'safe and effective, safe and effective, safe and effective' when we have a CDC

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approach to obtain true informed consent?



Janet Stanek, acting secretary of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, answers questions during a confirmation hearing Wednesday morning.

Stanek said health officials were obtaining informed consent for vaccination.

"One thing we've done is revisited the ads, which were brought up by many of you, and we have removed the TV ads," Stanek said. "We are making sure that in reviewing all of our ads that if we do have an advertisement or something that might mention getting the vaccine, that there is a link, and we are encouraging people to follow up with their doctor."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. The vaccines do carry a risk of such common side effects as muscle pain.

Serious safety problems are rare, according to the CDC. Anaphylaxis, thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome, myocarditis and pericarditis, and Guillain-Barré Syndrome are the four serious adverse events with evidence suggesting a link to vaccines.

"Reports of adverse events to VAERS following vaccination, including deaths, do not necessarily mean that a vaccine caused a health problem," the CDC states.



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Sen. Mark Steffen, R-Hutchinson, waits to question KDHE acting secretary Janet Stanek during a confirmation hearing Wednesday morning.

An autopsy found that a Topeka-area woman died last year of "anaphylaxis due to COVID-19 vaccination."

More: [Kansas woman Jeanie Evans died of an allergic reaction to COVID-19 vaccine, autopsy shows](#)

"The decision to stop the vaccine advertising, both digital and television, was made as daily cases were falling and we began to look at transitioning to steady state as it relates to COVID," KDHE spokesperson Matt Lara said in an email. "We stopped the advertising to allow us time to review what our next steps are and what messaging we still need to push out."

The health department continues to promote vaccination clinics statewide.

"Vaccines remain the best tool to protect people from COVID-19, slow transmission, and reduce the likelihood of new variants emerging," the agency said in a Wednesday news release.

Gov. Laura Kelly [appointed Stanek to lead the state's health agency](#) in November after ousting Lee Norman. She took over in their early days of the omicron surge.

"We've talked about educating citizens on early treatment of COVID," said Steffen, who has promoted the unproven off-label drugs ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine. "You've been in this interim position while cases skyrocketed. Did you do anything to help people understand what their early treatment options were ... any educating, any public service announcements in regards to early treatments?"



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making all our decisions for us." He contended that public health puts "the greater good over the individual" rights.

"Are you comfortable with the concept that individuals have to be sacrificed for the well-being of society?" he said. "Like pushing vaccines so hard. You knew people were going to be injured, you knew people were being injured, and yet we didn't hear anything about that."

More: [Kansas Republicans on mission to fulfill COVID special session promise with stronger legislation](#)

Stanek said people should talk to their doctors and read CDC publications.

In January, Steffen called the KDHE vaccine ads morally and legally objectionable.

Sen. Mike Thompson, R-Shawnee, said the ads should have disclaimers about risks of adverse reactions.

"There's no effort by your agency to at least put a seed of doubt in people's mind," Thompson said, adding, "The perception is the vaccines are safe and effective," and he has "done a lot of research on this."

Jason Tidd is a statehouse reporter for the Topeka Capital-Journal. He can be reached by email at jtidd@gannett.com. Follow him on Twitter [@Jason_Tidd](#).

This article originally appeared on Topeka Capital-Journal: [KDHE pulls Kansas TV ads calling COVID vaccines safe and effective](#)



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