

Some Thoughts on the Covid 19 Vaccines

Covid 19 is a very serious illness that can result in death, serious chronic symptoms. It is highly contagious. It is currently in a phase known as a pandemic, meaning it is spreading fast and wide. As the population immunity grows over time at some point it will almost certainly become more like a regular flu or perhaps like a common cold. As a matter of fact, there are at least four other Corona viruses that can cause the common cold. Almost certainly, these other coronaviruses began as serious pandemics when they first infected humans.

Fortunately, pandemics always end. They always end because of population immunity. Population immunity only occurs by two mechanisms. The first way and only way for most of the time humans have walked the earth is through infection. The second, only invented a couple hundred years ago is vaccines.

Natural infection results in deaths, severe illness, chronic symptoms in some people. These risks are worse in the elderly and sickly and obese. But there are very real risks in otherwise healthy people including children. Natural infection also increases the presence of virus in the community thus putting others at increased risk, and further necessitating the need for masking, distancing, avoiding indoor spaces and limiting gatherings. Natural infection and the increase viral numbers this causes also increases the likelihood of further viral mutations which potentially the rates and seriousness of infections and lengthen the duration of the pandemic.

Vaccines work by teaching the immune system about a potential invader using various mechanisms short of a full infection. No vaccine is 100% risk free. All vaccines have risks which must be weighed against the risks. It should never be assumed that the benefit of any given medical intervention outweighs the risks.

How should we weigh the risks-benefits of the Covid vaccines? In the case of Covid, the math is simple. The benefits are high. In a pandemic almost everyone will get infected in the coming years. Just like the Native Americans when small pox and measles arrived, we have no preexisting immunity. The treatment options, although improving, are limited.

The main treatments are offering support while the immune system works to control the virus and heal. The best interventions are the monoclonal antibodies, but they are very expensive and must be given in a timely way. Some alternative treatments have some potential to help, but none have been shown so far to be highly effective in controlled studies and using untested treatments especially when very sick is potentially dangerous. It is far safer to avoid the Covid 19 disease and the illness, death, and long-term symptoms that are a serious risk.

All the approved vaccines offer strong immunity, in most cases preventing infection, and in the case of breakthrough infection the vaccines prevent almost all serious illness and death. The risks are low. These vaccines are based on new remarkable technologies that allow for rapid development. They have been studied for safety and optimal dosing. Studies have shown very low incidence of serious side effects and delayed side effects from vaccines generally are very unusual.

Some people believe they don't need a vaccine because they have had Covid 19. There is some merit to this point, as many who have had covid probably do have good immunity to further infection. But the only way to be fairly certain of a past infection is a past positive PCR test and even this is not conclusive. We just don't have any good tests in common use that can measure your Covid immunity status. Also, many folks who have long covid symptoms have reported that their symptoms resolved or improved following vaccination. Several theories might explain this, but research is ongoing.

Widespread immunity is the only thing that will stop this or any other pandemic. This immunity can only come about from natural infection and vaccines. In this case, both will play a vital role. Clearly the best way to create community and individual immunity with the least amount of death and suffering is the vaccines. If you have not already done so, please protect yourself and others by considering the vaccine now.

Sincerely,
Jordan L. Michels, DC