The great vaccination debate

COVID-19 vaccination continues to dominate the news, but there are still so many people who refuse to be vaccinated. Some of the reasons given are ridiculous (in my not very humble opinion), while other people have real concerns. It’s also fascinating to follow the debates on mandatory vaccination. Sometimes I’m even able to understand both sides of the argument, but I haven’t been convinced by any of the anti-vaccination reasons.

In the words of a pharmacist

I’ve introduced you to my friend Briony Chisholm before. She posted something on Facebook recently about a disturbing event. I have her permission to share her experience with you, so I’m letting her share a piece of her mind in this issue, and I do hope that she will be given peace of mind when everyone is vaccinated.

“I haven’t climbed on my soapbox for quite a while because, well, I was just tired. I am tired. Like all of us, tired of all this. And I’m not on the frontlines, I’m a good few paces behind them. I cannot even fathom the depths of their exhaustion right now.

I was also quiet because I was ashamed. A few weeks ago, I had what I can only describe as a mini breakdown, which made me behave really badly. A guy who lives on the streets came to our gate and asked for matches. GM threw a box to him from the stoep, where she was sitting. I shouted from inside, asking if he’d had the jab, hoping to tell him where to access it, if he hadn’t.

He proceeded to go on a rant about how he didn’t care about COVID, he shares his cigarettes with whoever he likes, sleeps with whoever he likes, and on and on. I lost it and started screaming ‘Go!’ every time he opened his mouth until he eventually went away.

It left me breathless and shaking. I am not one for spewing angry words, I have never screamed at anyone. I had never screamed at anyone. And it’s definitely not the way to deal with vaccine-hesitants. It gave me a fright. It made me take stock of the levels of anxiety we’ve been living with over the last 18 months. All of us.

And it highlighted my reason for so frantically pushing to get people vaccinated, protected. It’s self-serving: I miss socialising, I miss going into shops (something I never thought I’d miss), I miss theatre and movies and live music and just sitting watching people, eavesdropping, breathing the air of strangers.

Obviously, I want everyone else protected, too, the ones I love, the ones they love. The bottom line, though, is that until enough people are vaccinated, I need to stay protecting myself, hidden, away from groups of people.

You see, despite my being vaccinated, I’m high risk, possibly. Probably. Being quadriplegic, I have reduced lung function. Most risky, though, would be being hospitalised. I need extra care, extra turning to prevent pressure sores, various other bodily afflictions that require constant care. In a COVID ward filled with people requiring high levels of care, staffed by healthcare workers run off their feet, my prognosis would not be good.

So that’s my sorry tale which leads into my soapboxing. If I could, I’d be out there, prepping jabs at vaccination sites, driving people to get their jabs, etc. But I can’t, so instead I do this, in the hope that it’ll drive you, my lovely Stalkbook friends, to get out there and do your bit to get us all protected.

And in this little rant, it begs you to offer up this argument to those saying ‘I’m healthy, I don’t need the jab’. Do it for me, for the thousands of others for whom COVID-19 could very well be a death sentence. This wave has shown that it’s also not quite as simple as we initially thought, risk-stratifying who this disease will take, so do it for you, too, you’re precious.

The frustration of not being able to get in there and help has weighed heavily on me, too, while my colleagues work themselves to the bone. One shining beam of light: I volunteered to help the amazing admin team over at the South Africa VacciNation Facebook page and it is pure joy. Celebrating those who get the jab, helping those who’re unsure by giving them facts and wiping out all the crazy myths and conspiracy theories and, let’s face it, the satisfaction of booting the (deadly) anti-vaxxers who invariably infiltrate the group.

If you know people who’re unsure, or you need some positivity in your life, head over there.

Mask your snouts, wash your paws, get the jab and, most importantly, help those around you get the jab, precious things.

Day 544 of self-isolation, day 523 of government lockdown, as SA drops to level 2 and I admit my overwhelm.”

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