

**The Golden Anniversary of the
Society of Philippine Surgeons in America
was celebrated on October 22, 2022 in Las Vegas, Nevada,
amidst this challenging sign of the times**

Pandemic of absurdities

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The COVID-19 pandemic is turning into a pandemic of misinformation, confusion, and non-compliant-self-destructive decisions that also endangers the majority of the people who wisely followed science and decided to get vaccinated against this deadly virus. Without getting about 80 percent of our population vaccinated as soon as possible (in our race against the rapidly mutating virus), we are doomed to have more serious waves of this pandemic. It is the nature of viruses and bacteria to mutate to a super-killer strain that will be totally resistant to any vaccine or drugs and kill billions, not millions. Fear mongering? No, as a cardiac surgeon and as an individual, I speak with science and common sense behind me to help provide factual scientific data to the public to save lives.

To those who set aside politics and political correctness and follow the science, the decision is crystal clear: As of October 24, 2021, of the more than 6.84 billion worldwide (44.5 percent of global population) vaccinated, around 176 million in the USA (56.6 percent of the population), there was a tiny fraction who died, less than a fraction of one percent. Whether the deaths were related to the vaccine or to their health issues to begin with was not clear in many of the cases.

Now, how many died from COVID-19? More than $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million globally, around 72,000 in the USA, and about 42,000 in the Philippines, and counting. One does not have to be a statistician to conclude that the deaths from COVID-19 is at least hundreds of thousand times greater than the deaths from the vaccines. The more virulent Delta strain (B.1.617.2) now accounts for about 90 percent of the deaths, many breakthrough infections. We ought to be more scared of COVID-19 than these modern state-of-the art mRNA vaccines!

About 20 percent or around 60 million people in the USA refuse to get the vaccines. Logical concern is understandable, but extreme fear of the vaccines (already proven to be safe and effective) to the point of abandoning a life-saving option is simply against our natural instincts of survival.

Risk/benefit ratio

The chances of getting killed running across a busy highway is much greater than dying from the vaccines. Getting killed by the vaccines is at least 20 times less than the death rate of dying from a vehicular accident (1 in 107) and

yet we continue to drive. Deaths from choking on food (1 in 2,535), deaths from drowning (1 in 1,228), crossing the streets (1 in 543), bicycling (1 in 3,825), all greater than the chance of dying from the vaccines (around 8 per million, or 1 in 125,000), an actual death rate of 0.0019 percent). Considering there are now at least 165 million Americans vaccinated, these are low complication rates, medically speaking, compared to the fatality rate of COVID-19. These are actual statistics, uncontested data. All one has to do is to analyze the data and the risk/benefit ratio. A 5th grader could do this and make the right choice. Obviously, the risk from the vaccines is significantly much lower than the risk from COVID-19 infection and the benefit from the vaccines (no benefit for getting COVID-19) is overwhelming.

Preventable deaths

The unvaccinated people (the 20 percent or 60 million who currently refuse the vaccines) are at the gravest risk. More than 90 percent of those who have been infected lately and those who died were unvaccinated individuals. This is not unexpected, in this “pandemic of the unvaccinated.” And thousands more unprotected people will die.

When at least 80 of the 333.1 million population of the United States (of the 111.480,268 of the Philippines) are vaccinated, we could achieve herd immunity and end this pandemic in each country. So far, almost 756 thousand people around the globe (around 72,000 in the USA alone, almost 42,000 in the Philippines) have been killed by this virus as stated above.

The social media are full of dangerous inaccuracies about the vaccines that scare people. When one spews out lies and falsehood that endanger lives, it is an abuse, a twisted, insane exercise of free speech. It is uncharitable and a disservice to society (technically criminal) as it confuses and kills people. This pandemic of absurdities and irresponsibility must stop now to prevent more deaths.

Should we resume wearing mask?

Yes, to protect ourselves and others, we should wear a mask in public, covering our nose and mouth, even if we are vaccinated, since there are breakthrough infections that infected vaccinated individuals. We must also do social distancing and follow the original CDC preventive guidelines, until we have herd immunity. Masks work. If I sprayed flour or paint to 100 persons, half of them with a mask on and 6 feet or farther away, who would get the most flour or paint on their face? Masks and the vaccines do protect, albeit not 100 percent, just like the bullet-proof vests worn by SWAT teams and law enforcement agents around the world. Plain common sense.

Should the unvaccinated be allowed to mingle with those vaccinated?

It is a caveat in infectious disease control and prevention that these two groups of individuals be segregated for obvious medical reason. This is a

standard isolation policy in hospitals around the world. This could easily be implemented in a nation under a dictatorship, but not in a free country, where civil liberties are abusively invoked in a wrong fashion by some who do not give a damn about their fellowmen. Since no one knows who are vaccinated and who are not, it is wise and prudent to mask up and practice social distancing in public places, even for those who are fully vaccinated.

A deadly delay

The COVID-19 pandemic is being prolonged by the 20 percent of Americans who refuse the vaccines. Their bodies are acting as a huge reservoir where the virus continuously replicate and mutate to more severe (and deadlier) strains. They will spread the virus around exponentially, possibly making it necessary someday for people to need annual COVID-19 vaccination, like the annual flu shot.

Medically speaking, only a federally-mandated COVID-19 vaccination (like children's legal school vaccination requirements today) could fully eradicate this deadly virus. Vaccines ended Polio 65 years ago. Small Pox and various other infectious diseases are practically gone, thanks to vaccines. **But abuse of freedom, political correctness, and cancel culture today are standing in the way. In a democracy, national societal interest and safety must always prevail over individual civil rights.**

Think about this: Would you allow people who have active tuberculosis or any deadly infectious disease, who refuse treatment (as their constitutional right) to spread the disease and kill thousands? Would a federal mandate to compel these patients to get treatment to protect the public not justified?

A single individual is enough to perpetuate this pandemic, like the one Chinese individual who got infected with COVID-19 in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, and transmitted it to the whole world. Why then allow the 20 percent (about 60 million) who refuse the vaccines to hold the majority (260.8 million) of Americans hostage, forcing the 80 percent to face a lingering nightmare and potential death, not to mention a national economic disaster, simply because the unvaccinated are wrongfully invoking the freedom of (a bad) choice that kills? Is this just? Any choice that endangers the lives of others is not the kind of freedom guaranteed by the Constitution.

Politically, it is a dilemma, as the current bleak data show. The non-compliance of the 60 million anti-vaxers, emboldened by civil right agitators, is preventing the USA from achieving herd immunity to defeat this virus this year. **Medically speaking, sans politics, it is easy.** Just follow the science and the standard strategy for managing any infectious disease: **Vaccinate at least 80 percent of the population, with a national vaccination mandate.** In the meantime, everybody should resume masking, social distancing, handwashing, minimizing gatherings, doing behavioral modification, and practicing self-

discipline. If we did this today, we could attain herd immunity and a more normal life this Christmas.

Obviously, this is easier said than done in a free society. Normally, in a democracy, the 80+ percent majority (260+ million pro-vaccine Americans) should prevail over the 20 percent (60 million anti-vaxers). Thanks to our spineless political leaders, the reverse is enabled, a grave injustice to the majority of American people and to the existential detriment of society as a whole.

As of today, October 24, 2021, there are almost 245 million cases, close to 5 million deaths from COVID-19, worldwide; more than 46 million cases and more than $\frac{3}{4}$ million deaths in the USA; and, nearly 2.8 million cases and almost 42,000 deaths in The Philippines.

How many thousands more deaths are we waiting for before we do the right thing?

Indeed, a crazy catch 22 dilemma. May God have mercy on us all.

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Reprinted from MALAYA, Philippine national daily (in Manila), Asian Journal, Philippine News, Fil-Am STAR, and MegaScene (all in the USA), October 22, 2021.