

COLUMN

COVID-19 scenarios

With the politization of the COVID-19 pandemic, CDC preventive guidelines, vaccines, and booster, people are so confused and afraid, making the wrong choice, unwise decisions, endangering their lives and those of their loved ones, and people around them.

At this stage of the COVID-19 pandemic, here are proven scientific facts we now know and some scenarios good to discern:

The vaccines against COVID-19 and its variants were developed faster and more efficiently than past vaccines, not because they were rushed or shortcuts were taken, or prematurely deployed. The state-of-the-art Messenger Ribonucleic Acid (mRNA) technology made it possible. The old vaccines, using live/attenuated virus, etc., took longer (5-10 years or more) to create, but utilizing mRNA technique in designing the vaccine against SARS-CoV2 virus that causes COVID-19 was more efficient and faster to develop. This wonderful progress in medical science is a welcome advancement the whole world should be grateful for, and not be demonized as something improper, sinister, or dangerous. Vaccines today are a lot safer than those of yesteryears.

Wearing face mask properly (covering both the nose and the mouth, using KN95 mask or other CDC designated mask, social distancing, and avoiding crowds (if everyone in does the same) are more than 70 percent protective. The remaining risk depends on the health and integrity of the immune system of the individuals and their behavior.

Unvaccinated persons are at the highest risk (4-5 times more likely) to get COVID-19 infection, 10 times more likely to require hospitalization and ventilator support, 11 times more likely to die. Most of the new cases and 90 percent of the recent hospitalization and deaths involved unvaccinated individuals. Sad to say, this current situation is becoming infamous as the pandemic of the unvaccinated.

Collateral damages resulting from the unvaccinated segment of society include harboring the virus in their bodies, spreading the virus to the vaccinated ones causing breakthrough infections, filling up hospital beds and ICU, leading to cancellation of surgeries, endangering people with heart attack and other severe (non-COVID) illnesses due to unavailable ICU beds.

Clinical experience shows that more than a third (36 percent) of unvaccinated who recovered from COVID-19 infection had ZERO antibody against the virus. Natural immunity, following COVID-19 infection, is not consistently effective enough to ward off infection. This post-infection immunity also fades faster than the immunity from the vaccines. Vaccination provides more

effective and longer-lasting immunity compared to natural immunity from infection. We cannot rely on natural immunity alone for protection.

Evidence-based clinical studies have shown that the effectiveness of the current COVID-19 vaccines wanes after around 6 months after the second shot. This is the scientific justification for the booster (third) shot, which increases the antibody titer to 10-12 times, providing more than 4 times greater protection against COVID-19 breakthrough infections, whether due to the original SARS-CoV2 virus, the Delta variant, mu, and other strains. The Israel experience proves these findings and European countries are favoring booster shots.

Unvaccinated individuals must wear a mask, do social distancing, wash hands frequently, and stay away from crowds because they are at the gravest risk to get infected. Doing so would also protect others.

Vaccinated persons must practice the same preventive measures above because the two vaccines provide only about 90-95 percent protection, so there is still between 5-10 percent risk to get infected. Everyone must be careful.

Had at least 80 percent of the population of the United States (333,420,888+) been fully vaccinated soon after the vaccines were available on December 11, 2020, we would have started to develop herd immunity as a nation by now and celebrate a normal Christmas this year.

But it was not meant to be, and predictably so, because people believe politicians, civil rights agitators, social media misinformation and fake news, rather than have faith and follow medical science.

A survey report a few months ago revealed that 20 percent (more than 60 million) of the US population were against the COVID-19 vaccines. The warm bodies of these unvaccinated individuals now act as the host reservoir of the virus, rapidly replicating ("manufacturing") and mutating, churning out more virulent and more deadly strains. Without a host, the virus self-destruct.

A historical footnote: In 1721, inventor Benjamin Franklin and his brothers were highly critical of variolation (inoculation) for smallpox. When the virus came to Philadelphia in 1736, it infected and killed his son. In his autobiography, Franklin wrote: "In 1736 I lost one of my sons, a fine boy of four years old, by the smallpox taken in the common way. I long regretted bitterly and still regret that I had not given it to him by inoculation." Sadly, there were (are) thousand others with similar regrets.

So long as there are unvaccinated people, this pandemic will linger and remain with us much longer than we want. It's really up to us, We, The People, our mindset, priorities, biases, and behavior.

Why won't the **federal** government **mandate** COVID-19 **vaccination** when almost $\frac{3}{4}$ million Americans have already died? How many thousand more

deaths do we need to do what is right? **National societal interest, safety, and welfare must prevail over individual freedom and civil rights.**

The historical constitutional basis for my suggestion and comment follows:

“In 1901 a deadly smallpox epidemic tore through the Northeast, prompting the Boston and Cambridge boards of health to order the vaccination of all residents. But some refused to get the shot, claiming the vaccine order violated their personal liberties under the Constitution. One of those holdouts, a Swedish-born pastor named Henning Jacobson, took his anti-vaccine crusade all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. The nation's top justices issued a landmark 1905 ruling that legitimized the government's authority to “reasonably” infringe upon personal freedoms during a public health crisis by issuing a fine to those who refused vaccination.” Smallpox has been officially declared globally eradicated. Pre-school requirement mandates vaccination for kids. Why not one for this greater killer, COVID-19?

To save the nation, its people, and economy, not to mention, sanity, and end this pandemic soonest, we need a federal mandate on vaccination and the implementation of the CDC preventive guidelines.

If we strictly follow science and modern epidemiology, we, together, could end this pandemic much sooner. It's really a no-brainer, even for a non-physician.

Philip S. Chua, MD, FACS, FPCS, a Cardiac Surgeon Emeritus based in Northwest Indiana and Las Vegas, Nevada, is an international medical lecturer/author, a Health Advocate, and Chairman of the Filipino United Network-USA, a 501(c)3 humanitarian foundation in the United States. Websites: FUN8888.com and philipSchua.com Email: scalpelpen@gmail.com