

An Editor's Invitation: Unvaccinated

Category: Unvaccinated

written by Paul Gross | September 1, 2021

Dear *Pulse* readers,

Over the last few days, I've had two conversations with individuals who have decided not to get vaccinated against the COVID virus. In both of those conversations, I struggled.

The first was with a patient whose wife is battling cancer, is receiving chemotherapy and is also unvaccinated.

"I believe in Jesus Christ," my patient tells me. "I told my pastor, 'I have more faith than you do!'"

I ask my patient why he would turn down a vaccine that the Almighty must have created to protect us.

But not so fast. "Who created the virus?" my patient points out.

"Six hundred thousand people have died," I say. "I'm sure some of them had faith as great as yours."

He doesn't buy it.

In one last ploy, I ask, "If your faith is so great, why don't you just walk out into traffic?" He laughs and shakes his head.

Our conversation was cordial on the surface, but inside I was churning. I wonder how he felt.

I worry about him. I worry even more about his wife.

What might I have done differently? *I should have listened more*, I tell myself. *I should have asked him about his faith—how he practices it and how it guides him in his life.*

Perhaps then I could have asked, with genuine curiosity, whether his faith requires him to choose. Does it preclude wearing a seat belt? Obeying traffic signals? Or taking his medications?

If I understood him a little more, maybe I wouldn't feel so frustrated.

I handled the second conversation more adroitly. I wish I could say that it left me feeling better.

This one was with a friend. It took place outdoors, over lunch. There were three of us at the table, two of us vaccinated (my wife and I), but not him. I cleared my throat and said, "I don't want to argue, but I do want to try to understand why you haven't been vaccinated."

It turns out he is close with two individuals—one a health professional—who are adamantly opposed to the vaccine. They've told him that the vaccine hasn't been properly vetted and could cause long-term harm.

"What made you get the vaccine?" he asked.

"After thinking about it, I decided that I was much more likely to die from COVID than from the vaccine."

My wife, a teacher, was more selfless and effective, I thought.

"I wanted to protect my family and my students," she said. "I couldn't bear the thought of making someone else sick because I hadn't been vaccinated."

It was a good conversation. And yet...

I still felt frustrated with my friend, and angry with the people giving advice that I see as potentially lethal to him—and to those around him.

Speaking of which, was it such a good idea to have lunch together? We were sitting outdoors, less than six feet apart. The masks came off when we ate. How risky was that? Will I feel okay doing it again?

Sadly, probably not.

What about you? What's been your experience with the unvaccinated in your life? Or perhaps you yourself are unvaccinated? What personal experiences have made you trusting or skeptical of the medical community?

September's *More Voices* theme is [Unvaccinated](#). Send us your lived experience. No opinion pieces, please. But please share what it's like for you personally to be on one side or the other of this divide. And while you're at it, take a look at last month's theme, [Smoking](#).

For more details, visit [More Voices FAQs](#)—or go directly to the [More Voices Submission Form](#).

Remember, your healthcare-related story should be 40-400 words. And no poetry, please.

We look forward to hearing from you.

With warm regards,

Paul Gross
Editor