

Better Safe than Sorry

Category: COVID Redux

written by Ronna L. Edelstein | January 2, 2024

When it came time to schedule my fourth COVID booster, I procrastinated. I'd experienced extremely negative reactions to the first two vaccines and the three previous boosters: chills, fever, aches, nausea, weakness. Dealing with those symptoms again did not appeal to me.

But then I remembered what happened to my paternal grandfather and to my beloved father—and I made the first available appointment to get the new booster.

In 1918, my grandfather got the flu. He refused to listen to his wife, my grandma, and got out of bed too soon in order to run the Five and Ten he owned. The flu proved stronger than Grandpa; it came back and turned him into a statistic—one of the millions who died in the flu pandemic.

Decades later, when I was around fourteen years old, Dad also got the flu. He lay in bed, barely able to swallow the chicken soup Ma made for him. I read to him, placed cool compresses on his forehead, and prayed a lot for his recovery. After about a week in bed, Dad thought he'd recovered enough to return to his optometric practice. That decision turned out to be the wrong one.

Within a few days, Dad was in the ICU. Not only had the flu had returned, but his flu redux was worse than his original case. Now, he needed oxygen to breathe; now, his physician contemplated inserting breathing and feeding tubes; now, wires were attached to his chest and IVs were placed in his veins. Thankfully, Dad survived, but it took him a long time to regain his energy.

Having grown up hearing stories of the grandfather I never met and having witnessed my dad almost endure the same fate as his father, I learned that the second round of an infectious disease can often be worse than the first round. I am grateful that I have thus far escaped COVID, but I fear that I could not only still get the disease but also get COVID redux. At age seventy-six, I do not know if my body could win the first battle, much less a second, against this debilitating virus. COVID remains a threat; COVID redux looms as a greater threat. Thus I wear a mask when in public, constantly wash my hands—and get the recommended boosters. Better safe than sorry.

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