

That First COVID Shot

Category: COVID Redux

written by Sara Ann Conkling | January 3, 2024

When COVID immunizations first became available in Florida, I was up three nights in a row scheduling shots for elderly members of my tiny church's congregation. I knew they would not be able to cope with the technology to schedule their own shots online. And even if they could, none would have the patience and persistence to keep entering their data each time the portal failed.

I didn't tell them beforehand that I would be doing this, because I didn't know if I would be successful. But once I scheduled the shots, I called each of them and gave them the news. Tears of gratitude flowed freely. I knew no better way to say "I love you".

My own immunization was an entirely different matter. Our governor decided that all those over sixty-five would gain access to shots before anyone who was younger and immunocompromised. As I scheduled shots for others, I did so knowing I wasn't eligible myself. I was over sixty, and I had been told by a physician that my immune system was "like a big door that never shuts, when other people's doors shut." But since I wasn't sixty-five, there was no shot available for me. I was living every day with a mortal fear of COVID.

I got an idea: What if someone who has a shot scheduled doesn't show up? I went to my local pharmacy to inquire about what they might do with leftover shots. The pharmacist was sympathetic to my plight and said they would set up a "list" of people who could walk in on very little notice to get a leftover shot. She agreed with me that the ethical imperative of not wasting the shots outweighed the governor's insistence that they only be given to people over a certain age. She said I would be the first person on their special "leftover" list. I took note of the long line of people waiting for shots, and the weariness on her face, and I knew she would never have time to call the people on that list.

So my plan B was to show up half an hour before the pharmacy closed, every day, and ask about leftover shots. On the third day of doing so, I received my first COVID vaccination.

The shot sent me to the emergency room. My heart reacted badly. But that is another story for another day.

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