

Cartwheels

Category: Healing

written by Linda R. Peckham | February 2, 2021

When the shutdown came last March in Michigan, I could not attend my favorite (only) granddaughter's wedding in Toronto, but she included me on FaceTime. I struggled with Zoom for City Council and Zoning meetings: many of us were fighting the building of a parking ramp in our neighborhood. From my window, I watched as crowds gathered at the Capitol, twice, to protest the shutdown, with kids, flags, blasting car horns and guns. My daughter in California threw a joyful 80th birthday party for me on Zoom, with family attending from four states and Canada. One day I was down, the next up.

I recorded these events in a Covid-19 journal I started keeping. I also recorded the increasing numbers of Covid-19 deaths in the state.

I have multiple sclerosis. For four months I did not have close contact with another person. I wore a mask to go to the mailbox. But mid-July, I held my breath and did my own grocery shopping, at 7am.

In the Fall, I monitored the development of vaccines. I had been a member of the IRB at Michigan State University (MSU), and the fast track made me nervous. I was concerned when the FDA allowed Pfizer and Moderna to release early reports of spectacular results after only 132 and 170 subjects. The results held.

Eight months into the pandemic, on November 5, Michigan's death toll was 7,470. By early December it was 10,138. Vaccinations began a week later. After seasons of fear, I wanted one.

When Category "1b" opened in January, I scrambled to get registered, trying every option I could find. I used the patient portal to contract my neurologist and telemedicine to contact my primary care doctor. I reached out to my county health department via their website. As word leaked out, I also contacted the MSU Pharmacy, Meijer, Walgreens, CVS, Sparrow Health Care and McLaren Health Care.

Same answers everywhere: *We know nothing.* And: *Check website to sign up.* But they had no vaccine yet, so I couldn't sign up. And: *Keep checking back.* I checked every day. I registered with the county health department. *We'll get back to you.* But they never did. Another site opened; slots were already filled. Again and again.

I was afraid I'd been skipped. The frustration was deep. I couldn't sleep.

Then an email from McLaren Health Care: *Register here. We'll get back to you.* In a few days, another email from McLaren: *Schedule your vaccination.*

"If I could still do cartwheels," I told a friend, "I would be flying across my lawn."

Linda R. Peckham
Lansing, Michigan