

The Shot

Category: The Vaccine

written by Claire Unis | January 2, 2021

Excitement. A little bit of fear. Some confidence, too. But most of all, fellowship.

Around me, spaced a careful six feet apart, are tables along with other scrub-clad men and women who work in the hospital, each of us perched on the edge of our seats, listening to a masked nurse explaining vaccination procedure.

There is no doubt this is a momentous occasion, an opportunity for protection against an unruly pandemic. But it is also a reminder how many of us have been facing down this demon, gliding silently past one another, expressions unreadable as we carry on about our work. We are doctors and nurses and scrub techs and lab techs and cleaners and food service, and we are all, every day, in this fight together. Why is that so easy to forget?

When I chose medicine, I believed I had picked an uncontroversial way to help people. I did not anticipate the waves of science deniers, the people who wanted nothing to do with facts, or the misinformation campaigns that would sweep across social media. (What was social media?) Those voices can be loud, the arguments draining. Some days I forget how many of us are still here, doing our best to fight illness and disease with evidence. After all, these days we tend to keep a distance from one another.

But here we are, ready to gamble together on a vaccine that is barely tested, putting ourselves forward to protect people who may not even appreciate the effort. The only side effect I register is the sense of belonging to something much larger than any one of us. The relief takes me by surprise, and the nurse preparing my vaccine notices tears in my eyes.

I take a deep breath.

I used to run and hide to avoid my shots. Lately I just look away, think of something else.

Today, I can't. I need a photo.

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