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To All Emergency Department and Hospital Staff,

I have been asked by the administration to write a letter or personal statement of sorts regarding the new COVID-19 vaccine which will be available to us very soon.

Overview

There are currently two vaccines approved under an Emergency Use Authorization (“EUA”). One is from a Pfizer, and the other is from Moderna, both American companies. They are very similar vaccines. Both utilize the same technology, require two doses, and are ~95% effective. The primary difference is that the Pfizer vaccine requires ultra-cold storage, whereas the Moderna vaccine only requires a regular freezer, reducing the risk of mishandling. Because we don’t have ultra-cold storage, we’re getting the Moderna vaccine.

Effectiveness

The phase three trial for the Moderna vaccine showed remarkable promise. That trial enrolled 30,000 people split into placebo and vaccine groups. There were 185 cases of COVID-19 in the placebo group and 11 cases in the vaccine group, indicating 94.1% protection. Of the 11 cases in the vaccine group, none required hospitalization or oxygen vs 16% in the placebo group. However, we don’t know how long the protection will last. You may need to receive booster vaccines from time to time — though not if so many people get the vaccine that the virus disappears from the planet, like what happened with smallpox.

Risks

Fatigue, headaches, muscle aches, and pain at the injection site are the most common vaccine side effects. You might experience fever and chills, though less commonly. These symptoms tend to last 4 hours to a day. But I’ll be honest about long-term side effects: we don’t know for sure. However, there’s no reason to suspect that there will be any. What we do know is that modern vaccines have an incredible track record of safety and efficacy.

Should I get the vaccine?

In my opinion, yes. We know the risks of contracting COVID-19. We’ve all seen patients suffer and even die of this terrible illness that has ravaged families and small businesses, and massively inconvenienced our daily lives. This virus, despite being survivable and even mild for most, has none-the-less killed 311,000 Americans as of this writing — more than the Iraq war, the Afghan war, and World War II combined. The death toll is continuing to rise at a record pace. For the last couple of weeks, it has been like having 9/11 happen every day. If left unchecked until everyone in America has contracted the virus, somewhere around 3 million Americans will die.

That potential tragedy is avoidable. I’ve never experienced a problem from vaccines, nor has anyone I know, nor have any of my patients. Vaccines are the number one most powerful and effective tool in the entire history of medicine. In order to stop this pandemic and get back to the easy life of 2019, we need to vaccinate this country. If not enough people get the vaccine, we’ll never be rid of COVID-19.

-Dr. Abendroth