American Blog 97 Should the Coronavirus Vaccine be Mandated? (2021) By Philip Ernest Schoenberg, PhD (I’m no medical doctor!)

Before the mishandling of the Coronavirus Pandemic, I would have been completely in favor of mandating vaccination laws of the states of California, Mississippi, and West Virginia, the strictest in the nation, where you have to prove that you are actually allergic to the virus which they passed after they had very bad experiences with measles. However, I am no longer in favor of such a policy as I shall explain. I taught the history of American technology for twenty years, so I am well aware of the flourishing of junk science from global warming to vaccinations to energy and other stuff.

 I am not concerned with abstract arguments that requiring vaccination is to violate liberty. You don’t have the right to drill a hole in the boat and sink everybody with it. Herd immunity is vital to our health and survival. However, the way the pandemic has been handled raises questions of personal safety in the mandatory application of vaccination.

The implementation of vaccination in this country made childhood diseases a thing of the past until an increasing number of people refused to take vaccinations. Herd immunity has started to disappear. Depending upon the disease you need a vaccination rate of 60% to 95% to stop transmission of the disease through herd immunity. It is not fun to get the disease as an adult as FDR found out when he was stricken by polio. Young babies that are too young to take certain vaccinations are most at risk. In a letter written in 1986, author Roald Dahl argues against anti-vaxxers after his seven-year-old daughter, Olivia, died of measles. <https://www.fatherly.com/news/roald-dahl-letter-anti-vaxxers/> People forget how common these diseases once were. And the killed, blinded, disfigured, paralyzed, crippled, and deafened and left other lifetime injuries.

The dishonorable history of anti-vaxxers goes back to this country to 1721. Rev. Cotton Mather of Boston, a layman with a strong interest in science. He preached that it was not God’s will that people die from smallpox, but they could be inoculated. The anti-vaxxers threw a rock through his window. Today, they use the Internet to polemicize against vaccination. As people got inoculated, the number of people dying from smallpox declined; those on the sidelines had a simple decision: get on the inoculation bandwagon to live or die because the fatality rate of 20% to 80% depending upon the age and frailty of the victim. People who recover from smallpox usually have severe scars, especially on the face, arms and legs. In some cases, smallpox may cause blindness. No cure or treatment exists for smallpox. I still have my inoculation scar. <http://sitn.hms.harvard.edu/flash/special-edition-on-19-disease/2014/the-fight-over-inoculation-during-the-1721-boston-smallpox-epidemic/> The disease was wiped outside the laboratory in 1980 but other diseases have not suffered a similar faith because of the failure of people to get vaccinated for a whole variety of reasons. Young Benjamin Franklin impressed by Rev. Mather as a role model of science became the father of American science.

So then, why am I opposed to mandatory vaccination for the Coronavirus vaccination?

First, I go with the wisdom of the crowd. 30% of medical people on the frontlines of fighting this pandemic do not want to take the vaccination at this time. Although it is almost a miracle that we have been able to come up with several vaccinations in less than a year, I share their concern that in the rush to make the vaccine available to the public, inappropriate shortcuts may have been taken, an insufficient safeguard to make sure they work, and they are not harmful. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some of these vaccines are not as effective as touted because people have died after they have been vaccinated or have been vaccinated after they recovered from Coronavirus and came down with it once more. Some possible side effects have been reported. Right now we are in the anecdotal stage, not the scientific stage of evaluating these vaccines. I am not one of those that will never be satisfied but the first rule of medicine, is “Do no harm.”

Second, there are vaccines in the pipeline that are easier to store, easier to use, and only require one application to be completely effective.

Third, the federal government has not always been forthright about its medical research. There have been many Tuskegee medical experiments where people received no treatment as part of a scientific experiment without their knowledge and consent. Some of the victims and their families but not all received compensation. None of the doctors and researchers suffered any consequences for their actions or were held accountable.

Fourth, incompetent political and medical leadership and grandstanding on the federal, state, and local levels do not inspire confidence in vaccination. President Barack Obama who had the same level of scientific background as you and I appointed a nonmedical person who knew how to mobilize and coordinate the medical bureaucracy to fight Ebola. The incoming Trump administration did away with the pandemic protocols in place and then President Trump downplayed the severity of the pandemic while actively sabotaging the fight with his suggestion of quack treatments. Governor Andrew Cuomo of New York State and Mayor Bill de Blasio of New York City, of a different political party, were no better. Instead of working together, they competed, feuded, polemicized, ,and politicized against each other.

Fifth, the rollout of the vaccine has been just as disorganized as the fight against the pandemic with incredible fiascos such as NYC and NYS setting up an inoculation site at Citi Field only to have no vaccinations. People spend endless hours on the telephone without getting a response, websites crashing, and then the injection sites run out of vaccination vials. Further roiling the waters is the politicization of who should get the vaccinations first.

Sixth, far too many people do not want to be vaccinated, and they have good reasons beyond the usual anti-vaxxers ones. They feel taking it at the present time is not worth the risk. One of the reasons why Prohibition failed was the unwillingness to compromise to permit some lighter alcoholic beverages to be used that would have made most people happy. Right now, the best strategy is to make a strategic retreat and reengage the public with a well-thought-out campaign of why people should be vaccinated. Since we don’t have enough vaccinations to go around at the present moment, why create an issue that will hurt vaccination efforts in the future?

Finally, le the vaccines prove themselves. Back in 1721, those that refused to get inoculated had a 60% to 80% chance of dying so that they were eventually wiped out while the rest were converted when others saw that the inoculation worked and got on board. If the vaccines work as advertised, then those rejecting vaccination will be the ones who suffer.

I myself am going to wait a few more months to see what the most effective and safe vaccine is, preferably a single-shot. I don’t want to wait on a que forever whether or actual forever to get a shot. I know this is a decision of life and death, but I prefer to leave my fate in my hands instead of the bureaucrats. This is not a conspiracy theory but commonsense. Let others be the lab rats.