

Your 'right' not to vaccinate delayed my cancer treatment

In health care, exposing the most vulnerable to a dangerous pathogen is unconscionable. I would state, the health care vaccine mandate has been 100% effective, because it eliminated patient exposure to individuals, who did not care enough about those who have entrusted their lives to them, to become vaccinated.

Your Turn

Kevin Kavanagh Guest columnist Over the past few weeks my writing was placed on hiatus, since I was finally able to obtain needed cancer surgery. The surgery had been previously delayed because a bunch of misguided souls were exercising their 'right' to not become vaccinated. And then exercised their right to receive protracted medical care by filling regional ICU's and hospitals; denying prompt medical treatment to many with serious illnesses.

During August and September, the United States' health care system has in many regions all but collapsed. In Tennessee, needed surgery was postponed and in some areas of our nation such as Idaho and Alaska, triage protocols were initiated.

And yes, cancer tends to grow as one waits, but because patients such as myself are older, have preexisting conditions and are COVID-19 negative; all of the death-cult coronavirus deniers can rest assured, none of us will be counted as a coronavirus death. Life in the United States will go on; unless of course, you collapse the supply chain by ignoring the pandemic and not provide safe working conditions.

And some of those so-called libertarians who advocate freedom from Government, actually want to use the Government to shackle the free market by prohibiting employers from implementing worker and patron safety measures. The era of Authoritarian Libertarianism, justified by pseudoscience, has been born.

All in all, the United States has become lax in its approach to infectious disease. My surgery carried a significant risk of contracting COVID-19, with the low vaccination rates in the United States along with very poor mask compliance. A risk I had to unwillingly endure. I should note that vaccination rates in every other industrial country are higher than those in the United States. In Portugal 86% of the

even some 'libertarians' are now advocating heavy-handed government intervention to tell privately-owned businesses what to do. But what about at a woodworking shop? Is it OK for employers to mandate masks to prevent inert particle exposure? If that is OK, then why can't a private employer mandate masks for an active, even more dangerous, biological pathogen?

The retort will be that masks do not work on small dry viral particles as measured by an electron microscope. But they do work with the aerosolized droplets of SARS-CoV-2, which measure between 10 to 100 microns and are produced by talking and loud speech.

And, do not be fooled by the sleight of hand arguments that cloth masks do not provide adequate protection (a valid concern for the Delta variant), therefore masks do not work. Masks do work, cloth masks may afford some protection, but let's improve our protection and obtain readily available N-95 masks.

Government mandates also have a place In health care, exposing the most vulnerable to a dangerous pathogen is unconscionable. I would state, the health care vaccine mandate has been 100% effective, because it eliminated patient exposure to individuals, who did not care enough about those who have entrusted their lives to them, to become vaccinated.

Unfortunately, the pandemic has become political with various parties using it as a means to further political careers, blaming mandates, proclamations and other restrictions on society's woes. Many of our leaders have not yet figured out, it is the virus that is in control. Our lagging workforce was blamed on generous unemployment benefits and parents needing to be at home to supervise home-schooling. However, once these interventions were lifted, the workforce still did not return to their jobs. They appear to be 'fed up' with unsafe working conditions and poor benefits.

population is fully vaccinated, Cambodia is 75% and in the United States only 57%.

The goal should be focused on the prevention of the spread of even mild disease since spread carries with it the risk of viral mutations and even mild disease is commonly associated with the debilitating effects of long COVID-19. At this point in the pandemic, no one can predict for sure what is going to happen. Rates are falling as we are entering our fourth trough in infections. Again, herd immunity advocates are becoming vocal with their predictions of victory over the invading virus. However, these false reassurances have been expounded after every surge and the Delta Variant crushed us, even though as early as May 2021 there was significant evidence of very high SARS-CoV-2 (the virus which causes COVID-19) antibody levels in the U.S. population.

No intervention is 100% effective. With time, all immunity wanes, decreasing individual protection. And the recent death of Colin Powell is a stark reminder that approximately one in 37 of us are immunocompromised and are at an even greater risk. Paradoxically, as vaccine effectiveness drops, the importance for all of society to become vaccinated increases, in order to stop the spread of the pathogen. The more of us who are vaccinated, the less likely an immunocompromised individual will be exposed to the virus.

Masks are also of utmost importance. Some prominent freedom advocates and

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This fall the only Grinch is the coronavirus. The virus may well continue to subside and go away, but it is desperately trying to find an immune-escape variant. In the United States, the website outbreak.info has identified four of Delta's progeny (AY.25, AY.4, AY.3 and AY.26), but none so far appear to have taken hold. All ages can spread the virus. Even children who often have asymptomatic infections can carry large quantities of replicating virus and maybe a reservoir for not only transmission but also for the formation of genetic variants.

If we continue to spread the virus, it will continue to mutate and may hit upon a variant to evade our falling immunity, causing an even more dangerous winter surge.

My family still follows infection control advice, and we are not Grinches. We are still planning to celebrate the Christmas holidays. But all who can, will be vaccinated and we will be using home testing of everyone prior to the celebration.

Kevin Kavanagh is a retired physician from Somerset, Kentucky, and chairman of Health Watch USA.

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