



Nurses during COVID-19's next wave

We need to accept responsibility for our choices.

By Leah Curtin, RN, ScD(h), FAAN



I'M PROUD TO BE A NURSE. You've made me prouder of my profession than I've ever been before. In the face of COVID-19, nurses across the globe are working tirelessly to help patients battle the virus.

Every practicing nurse is a hero and should be celebrated. Nurses have worked until they dropped, and many of us either couldn't go home because we lived with an at-risk partner, went home fearing that we were putting our children at risk, or went home crying because so many people died and we were the only ones to be with them. Some of us got the virus ourselves, some of us died, and others have long-term COVID.

For a short time, we thought we were nearing the end of this pandemic: vaccines were developed, patients with COVID-19 stopped being admitted to hospitals, and life was more or less returning to normal. Now it seems more hospitals are filling to capacity with patients who have the Delta variant. What makes this situation particularly difficult is that many of those patients could have avoided getting sick if they'd received the vaccine. I saw a physician on the news who said: "Many patients ask me if they can have the vaccine right now. And I have to tell them 'No. It's too late. You already have COVID.'" Over and over again, I've heard that this all could have been avoided. Indeed, it could have, as can more of the same. Leaving nursing—although I can't find it in my heart to

blame those who've chosen this route—isn't the answer. Getting people to accept vaccination, and getting yourself vaccinated, is a big part of the solution.

First and foremost, everyone has a right to body integrity. Second, everyone has a right to self-determination. So those who choose not to be vaccinated are within their rights, but only if they accept the responsibilities of the obligations attached to those rights. They also have a right to work, but only if they embrace the responsibilities of their choice. They don't have the right to put others at risk. Freedom and human rights all come with obligations. Without that understanding, free societies can't exist.

We have several vaccines to choose from, all of which have been safely administered to millions of people in the United States. It's important to know the facts about these vaccines. For example, none of the currently available vaccines contain aborted fetal cells. Fetal cell lines (not fetal tissue) descended from cells taken from elective abortions over 50 years ago were used in the laboratory setting to confirm the efficacy of the Pfizer and Moderna mRNA vaccines, but these lines are not in the manufactured vaccine. The Johnson & Johnson viral vector vaccine used a fetal cell line in the manufacturing process. The bottom line is that vaccination is the best protection against the Delta variant and the best way to avoid COVID-19.

For more information, search for reputable studies available on the internet and access information on the ANA Enterprise online COVID-19 vaccine resource page (bit.ly/2Vhf9n5). If we nurses have to do more, then I say, "Once more into the breach, dear colleagues. Once more..."

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