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Mandatory vaccinations, the imposing of fines, the segregation of citizens and promotion of inequality in the modern democracy of Greece. Is science allowed to "enforce" or silently back-up such policies?

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Abstract

Not applicable

Undoubtedly covid-19 is one of the most important health issues with more than 5,000,000 deaths worldwide to-date. Each country's government was tasked with taking several measures to protect public health, without causing direct or indirect harm, either in the short or the long term, to its citizens. It is the responsibility of science to provide without any bias or partiality the direction to ensure the maintenance of public health at the least cost. The MEDLINE database contains over 240,000 articles on covid-19 and about 2000 related meta-analyses. As we are still in a period of "learning", during which a massive amount of medical data is constantly added on a daily basis, not to mention the associated legal, social, and psychological implications, it is utterly inappropriate to create mandates out of any guidance that emerges. The proportionate degree of the measures against the pandemic, which can include the use of masks, COVID passes, lockdowns, fines, and mandatory vaccination, varies considerably from country to country. However, the global trends tend to merge on the fact that transparency in the conveying of information and the promotion of educated self-choice provide more rational, humane and effective management of the pandemic¹. The opinion of experts as displayed on television and the media carries the least degree of scientific credibility and recommendation, as defined in evidence-based medicine. Contrary to that, we should take into serious consideration, the degree of evidence that form the basis of the large study by Subramanian et. Al where it was shown that vaccination for covid-19 cannot control its spread regardless of the level of vaccination coverage, with data from 68 countries and 2947 counties in the US². Initial data from phase 3 clinical trial showed that the number needed to vaccinate (NNTV) to prevent one case of covid-19 was about 119 and especially to prevent severe disease, about 2380 (figure 1)³.

Vaccinated health workers are now known to transmit covid-19, with publications even showing over-transmission of the disease⁴⁻⁸. A careful review of the weekly covid-19 Vaccine Surveillance Reports of the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), beginning from Week 37 of 2021⁹, which is based on data from 18/8/2021 – 3/9/2021 and moving on, unfortunately displays clearly a constant and repeating pattern, which is that in the age groups from 30-80 years old, after

the prevalence of the delta strain, the new covid-19 cases per 100,000 of the respective population (case rate) are invariably more, sometimes even twice as many in the fully vaccinated individuals compared to the unvaccinated. The case rate among vaccinated individuals was also increased in the remaining age groups, with the exception of <30 and >80 years old. One can verify this pattern by running through the following weekly reports: Week 37 (p.13), Week 38 (p.13), Week 39 (p.14), Week 40 (p.13), Week 41 (p.13), Week 42 (p.13), Week 43 (p.19), Week 44 (p.20), Week 45 (p.22), Week 46 (p.23), Week 47 (p.33), Week 48 (p.44), Week 49 (p.35), Week 50 (p.39), Week 51 (p.40)^{9, 10}. As far as we know, there was never a lockdown affecting only the unvaccinated in the UK, compared to Greece. Beginning at Week 3 2022 (p. 38), the UKHSA started to produce these tables by counting only on people who had undergone booster vaccination, 3 doses in total, in the vaccinated group, and still the same pattern is observed. Moreover, moving forward to the most recent reports in 2022, Week 9 (p.45), Week 10 (p. 45), Week 11 (p.45), the pattern seems to become even worse, since the case rate among booster-vaccinated individuals in the aforementioned age groups climbs to three or even four times more than among the unvaccinated. Unfortunately, seems that vaccinating population has actually produces over-transmitters of the disease, instead of working towards the fallacy of creating an immunity wall. The aforementioned tables correctly point out that the proportionate rate of ER admissions and deaths are definitely lower in the vaccinated group compared to the unvaccinated, progressively increasing in proportion with age, although this difference has blunted considerably and has even gotten to even terms with the prevalence of the omicron strain. Consequently, taken all the facts in consideration, vaccination against covid-19 is clearly an individual protective measure, and not a collective one. In accordance with this, reports from Robert Koch Institute (RKI) in Germany mentioned that breakthrough infections are possible also among vaccinated staff at a similar viral load¹¹. Data of the last month from RKI underline that vaccinated were 66% out of new cases and died more frequently than unvaccinated¹², although vaccine effectiveness against hospitalization and ICU-treatment was preserved. In Israel, a new in-hospital outbreak has recently occurred where the source was a fully vaccinated patient with covid-19¹³. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced four of the top five counties with the highest percentage of fully vaccinated population (84.3 - 99.9%) as "high" transmission counties¹³. Consequently the Lancet has published a correspondence where it is noted that after the prevalence of Delta and ongoing Omicron variant and the waning of immunity over a few months, "stigmatizing unvaccinated people is unjustified" according to the cumulative data of the pandemic¹³. Last but not least as for vaccination of health workers against covid-19, a House of Lords committee in a dramatically written newsletter refused to recognize a mandatory since it is not economically, scientifically and morally confirmed¹⁴. This has led to the total revoking of the measures of mandatory healthcare worker vaccination and the vaccination-as-condition-of-deployment (VCOD) in the UK, as officially stated in the Government resolution of 01/03/2022¹⁵. Consequently, the UK has not suspended or sacked healthcare workers in the NHS, during the massive winter outbreak. The same rationale was followed by other western countries, such as Sweden and other Scandinavia, who never even considered mandatory vaccinations in healthcare workers or other population groups, and they have definitely managed to keep the pandemic's toll to a far better level than in Greece. The green pass of convalescent patients in Greece is valid for 3 months. This is totally incomprehensible, as the superiority of naturally-acquired immunity has been recently demonstrated by the CDC (19-01-2022)¹⁶. In this report, by studying the 18% of the population of the United States, it has been shown that naturally-acquired immunity was more potent, up to 5 times, and longer-lasting

compared to vaccine-acquired immunity against delta variant. The systematic review and meta-analysis by Chivese T. et al. in a total of 18 countries and 12,011,447 patients showed strong immune memory in covid-19 patients for at least 8 months, with a 0.2% probability of reinfection¹⁷, and there are studies showing protection against reinfection for 1.5-2 years, as well as protection for severe infection for many years, even in asymptomatic covid-19 infected individuals^{18, 19}. The hesitancy to acknowledge the superior duration and quality of naturally-acquired immunity seems totally unreasonable and out of alignment with global expert opinions and evidence-based studies²⁰. The same applies to the undeniably more benign epidemiologic course of the omicron variant, which seems to increase the hazard ratio of breakthrough infection among vaccinated¹⁶. Moreover, relying solely on mass vaccination with an imperfect vaccine, as defined by its inability to control disease contraction and transmission, carries significant public health issues, eventually negating any expected benefits^{21, 22}.

The translation product of the new vaccine technologies, the spike protein, appears to activate several molecular mechanisms, by binding on ACE2 receptors, impairing the DNA repair mechanism, causing vascular endothelial dysfunction and dysfunction of the tumor suppressor proteins p53 and BRAC1,²³⁻²⁵.

While it was initially thought that the spike protein would remain in deltoid muscle cells, we now know that it migrates and circulates for at least 4 months after vaccination²⁶. It was also initially thought that the mRNA contained in the respective vaccines cannot affect the cell's DNA in any way, but this again has been overthrown by a recent Swedish study²⁷ in which the presence of DNA as a product of reverse transcription, as well as up-regulation of the reverse transcriptase gene, is demonstrated in a hepatic cellular line as early as 6 hours after vaccination.

During the pandemic, the antibody-dependent enhancement (ADE) of infection is crucial since the present strains are different from the first one with disastrous consequences²⁸.

In the meantime, myocarditis, predominantly in young males, due to direct toxic effects²⁹, detection of unusual thrombotic events such as cerebral sinus thrombosis (implicating blood-brain barrier penetration)³⁰, cardiovascular deaths, including sudden cardiac deaths attributed to the particular pathophysiology of the well-described Kounis syndrome³¹, as well as miscellaneous other adverse events with common feature the activated inflammatory and thrombogenic process³², compose a dynamic profile of vaccines requiring a continuous alert of safety³³.

The questions that arise need to be clarified transparently by properly structured randomized clinical trials, with the investigation of molecular pathways in more samples. Along with this, the deadlines for the completion of studies by pharmaceutical companies are 2023 and 2024³⁴.

A major issue, arising from the reduction in number available of healthcare workers in countries where mandatory vaccinations are implemented, is the quantitative and qualitative understaffing of health care units. The availability and lack of training and specialization of health personnel are clear factors in increasing mortality^{35, 36}. Department understaffing results in an increase in mortality for each inpatient by 3% daily³⁷. On the contrary, countries which invested in the steady improvement of medical services achieved a reduction in ICU mortality over time³⁸. Politics is a completely different science from medicine. Transparency does not reduce the intention to vaccinate¹, so there is no need for propaganda.

Stigmatization and segregation are not appropriate in civilized societies as they can lead by themselves to further major public health issues³⁹. There has already been an increase in domestic violence and suicide attempts among young

people^{40, 41}.

It is important to research additional pharmacological and non-pharmacological prevention options to establish health and social equilibrium, to avoid the nightmare that is setting in with general confidence in medicine constantly declining⁴². Authorities should be flexible in renewing guidelines and adapting new concepts about Covid-19 disease⁴³.

Ultimately, science exists only through transparent dialogue and the use of reliable methods, under the rationale of proposing rather than imposing solutions. Healthcare has many dimensions as there is a social dimension in addition to the physical, mental and spiritual. The fight against any health crisis, regardless of its source, is about multidimensional healthcare, looking forward to the future.

As can be concluded, the policy of putting unvaccinated healthcare workers on suspension, has not only failed to improve the pandemic's outcomes, but on the contrary has produced a significant shortage of experienced staff, increasing inpatient mortality and leading the remaining staff to physical and emotional exhaustion. The proper course of action to promote safe healthcare, in addition to upholding the relevant preventive measures, would be to ensure that the healthcare workers come to work healthy, which means not being infected by or even asymptomatic carriers of the virus, which can be established only through regular diagnostic testing on both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals of the institution's staff. Consequently, as the pandemic tends to wane, even these measures will eventually become obsolete.

Table 2. Vaccine Efficacy against Covid-19 at Least 7 days after the Second Dose.*

Efficacy End Point	BNT162b2		Placebo		Vaccine Efficacy, % (95% Credible Interval)‡	Posterior Probability (Vaccine Efficacy >30%)§
	No. of Cases	Surveillance Time (n)†	No. of Cases	Surveillance Time (n)†		
	(N=18,198)		(N=18,325)			
Covid-19 occurrence at least 7 days after the second dose in participants without evidence of infection	8	2.214 (17,411)	162	2.222 (17,511)	95.0 (90.3–97.6)	>0.9999
	(N=19,965)		(N=20,172)			
Covid-19 occurrence at least 7 days after the second dose in participants with and those without evidence of infection	9	2.332 (18,559)	169	2.345 (18,708)	94.6 (89.9–97.3)	>0.9999

A) $162/18325 = 0.0088$, B) $8/18198 = 0.0004$ Γ) $0.0088 - 0.0004 = 0.0084$ Δ) $1/0.0084 = 119$

Efficacy Endpoint Subgroup	BNT162b2 (30 µg) (N ^a =21669)		Placebo (N ^a =21686)		VE (%)	(95% CI ^a)
	n ^b	Surveillance Time ^c (n ^{2d})	n ^b	Surveillance Time ^c (n ^{2d})		
Severe COVID-19 occurrence after Dose 1	1	4.021 (21314)	9	4.006 (21259)	88.9	(20.1, 99.7)
After Dose 1 to before Dose 2	0		4		100.0	(-51.5, 100.0)
Dose 2 to 7 days after Dose 2	0		1		100.0	(-3800.0, 100.0)
≥7 Days after Dose 2	1		4		75.0	(-152.6, 99.5)

A) $9/21686=0.00046$, B) $1/21669=0.00004$ Γ) $0.00046 - 0.00004=0.00042$ Δ) $1/0.00042=2.380$

Figure 1. Calculation of the Number Needed to Vaccinate (NNTV) for covid-19 occurrence (first table) and for severe illness (second table). Data from phase 3 clinical trial of BNT16b2³.

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