



COVID: PUNISHING THE UNVACCINATED

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As you read this, in the frozen country to the north of us, there is a gigantic Covid protest, newly disbanded. A "[Freedom Convoy](#)" of truckers, which started out in British Columbia (near Seattle), arrived in the Canadian capital, Ottawa (near New York State) to protest that country's vaccine policies. Additional support for this initiative now exists in most major cities in that country. The U.S. usually the leader in these sorts of things, is now emulating our cousins to the north. As well, copycat protest of this sort have taken place in many other countries.

However, [according to Howard Stern](#), hospitals should turn away would-be patients who are unvaccinated. He stated, "At this point, they have been given plenty of opportunity to get the vaccine." He continued, in the inimitable way we have come to expect from him, when challenged on the ground that mandatory vaccinations or punishments violate freedom: "F--- their freedom. I want my freedom to live."

Then, too, there is an attack on the unvaccinated emanating, of all places, from the esoteric area of bioethics. For the uninitiated, the be all and end all in this discipline, at least for most practitioners, is that past behavior is irrelevant for sick patients. When someone comes to the hospital, he is treated just like anyone else, based only on the symptoms presented. In other words, doctors should not stint in their treatment of the obese or heavy smokers on the ground that their present ailments are self-induced. If they would have behaved better, more rationally, they would not likely be in the hospital in the first place, unfairly taking up valuable medical resources that could have been used for more worthy ill people.

This principle went so far as to treat in the exact same manner a suicide bomber in Israel who failed to kill himself -- and his victims; the past is the past and is irrelevant; only the medical status of the patient, right now, is of relevance for treatment. Triage of course can take place; but only based on the present and the future likelihood of success, not on what occurred beforehand.

However, thanks to Covid, even this primordial principle is now under attack by medical ethicists. Practitioners, many of them kicking and screaming in protest since they are so deeply mired in this philosophy, are now very reluctantly reconsidering this basic and long-standing view of theirs.

What are we to make of all of this?

It is easy to see the point of Howard Stern and his fellow philosophers. The non-vaccinated do pose a threat, not only of contagion and spreading infection, but also of hogging up hospital beds and forcing doctors to turn away needy folk such as stroke victims, sufferers from heart attack and kidney failures, and this is the most important point, through no fault of their own on the part of the latter.

Let us argue by analogy. Suppose that [Typhoid Mary](#) refused to be taken out of circulation. Posit that she had insisted upon returning to her job in the food dispensary, where she could continue to infect others. Would we have treated her with kid gloves as some people still insist the unvaccinated be dealt with? Of course not. So, if they are akin to her, then we have to take our hats off to Howard Stern, and applaud this new direction in bioethics.

However, there is a disanalogy. When Typhoid Mary was put out of commission, it was based on the best scientific evidence then available. She was an asymptomatic carrier, and that was the end of the matter. Disagreeing with this assessment was akin to denying the earth is round, or that $2+2=4$.

Do we have the same level of confidence nowadays regarding Covid? We do not. The powers that be claim scientific support – over and over again -- for their claim that the vaccines are efficacious in preventing Covid, and have no serious negative repercussions.

But these claims cannot be made with the imprimatur of science. For that is a deliberative institution, where all opinions are welcome and decisions are made on the basis of evidence, nothing more and nothing less.

In the event, however, doctors [have been threatened](#) with the loss of their licenses and epidemiologists and virologists with the [loss of their jobs](#) for questioning the official analysis and supposedly spreading "[misinformation](#)." That is not science. That is the absence of the scientific method.

Further, the burden of proof rests not with those who wish to defend practices stemming from time immemorial, but with those who wish to radically change them. Unless otherwise proven guilty of a crime, you are supposed to be innocent. The unvaccinated have not been proven guilty of anything, at least not by science, and thus should not be treated as criminals. Yet threats against them abound: not only [being triaged](#) out of hospitals, but [losing their children](#), even being compelled to vaccinate, at the point of a gun.

Not kosher; not at all kosher.

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Featured image: "Triumph of Science," by Jordan Henderson; painted in 2022.

