It’s No #AprilFoolsDay Joke... My Parents Are Getting Vax’d!

March 31, 2021 By Shawn Decker

It’s been three weeks since I got vax’d. I called my parents that night to let them know. A couple of days before, I was just about to call them but decided not to, because I was afraid I might have to defend the decision. That’s because, a couple of months ago, my mom expressed reservations about the safety of the vaccines.

Thankfully, my parents were happy to hear the news!

Their skepticism was certainly shaped by my experiences with hemophilia and the unsafe products of the 1980s and early 90s that infected me with hepatitis B, HIV and hepatitis C. How could you not be affected by that? Each new addition to my medical resume was so much more disappointing than the last, because they could have been prevented. The problem with capitalism in healthcare is that blood companies put profits over lives, and pretty much said that getting hepatitis B was just an unfortunate reality of receiving blood product treatments, when instead they could have implemented safer- and costlier- blood collecting practices. (I support lifting the “gay blood ban”, by the way. It’s outdated and stupid.)

That’s why I was surprised when my mom said that she was going to get vax’d, too. After Joe Biden urged Americans to do their part and get vaccinated, my dad overcame his reservations, too. It’s so nice having a president that is inspiring people to protect themselves and their communities.

Gwenn, my lovely partner, had been sleuthing for them and today was the day when she found appointments for the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, the only one my parents wanted to take. I can’t really articulate how this all makes me feel. I had deep concerns about my parents being exposed to COVID-19. They’ve been wearing masks out, and trying to be as safe as they can. But like everyone, the definition of personal safety varies. Every once in awhile I’d be on the phone talking to them, and hear something that made me anxious. Like last Summer, when my dad was jazzed that movie theaters were re-opening...

He fucking loves movies. So there I was processing the fact that I could lose my father to this pandemic because he went to see Bill & Ted Face the Music. That was music I just didn’t want to face. Fortunately, I don’t think he got out of the house to see one.

My mom? Well, she loves to drive and visit family and friends. I've actually been surprised by how she's settled into home life during all of this. Sure, she probably gets out more than I know, but all we can do is encourage our loved ones to do their best. At the end of the day, we all have to make our own decisions, right?

That's why I'm proud of my parents. I know this probably wasn't easy. And I know that, when that needle is closing in on them (on April Fool's Day, no less!), their mind will race to the worst case scenarios... they may even subconsciously feel and relive the past, when a "totally safe" treatment in 1994 gave me hepatitis C. (The box actually read, "WARNINGS: None.")

But we've also all been bailed out by advances in medicine, too, for our various ailments. We're all lucky to still be alive to ponder the ever-changing world that surrounds us. And, finally, the thoughts of having survived one pandemic in AIDS only to see my parents perish unnecessarily to today's pandemic are disappearing...

Of course, none of us know what the future holds. But, as I said, we can only do our best. What I do know is that I'll be sleeping a little easier knowing that my parents are going to be safer now. And I'm so proud of them for overcoming the ghosts of the past, which can often come back to haunt us if we don't make peace with them.

Positively Yours,
Shawn

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