Pretty Sure I Got The Rona This Summer

September 8, 2021 By Shawn Decker

On July 5th I wrote a blog entry about getting sick. I was careful not to assume it was COVID-19. I even took an at home test that came back negative. Admittedly, I didn't take the second test. You see, the kit comes with two and encourages you take both. Guess I was saving the other for a rainy day, or perhaps I got the result I was hoping for and moved on.

A couple of weeks later, a friend who was vaccinated got sick. I looked up symptoms of people who are vaccinated and contract the virus and my friend didn't have any of the symptoms listed... but I'd had four out of the top five listed when I was sick. After subsequent antibody testing, it was clear that I'd likely been infected with COVID-19. So no more than two weeks after de-masking, and taking part in the "Hot Vax Summer!" that Stephen Colbert and Sanjay Gupta had signed off on, I was exposed to the virus and got sick.

Fortunately, I was only sick for close to a week. And only had one night where I had a 100-degree temperature. A little ibuprofen took care of that. I also went through a box and a half of tissues for about four days. Having been HIV positive for most of my life, and having been born with hemophilia, I'm inclined to move past my "sick days" quickly... I take all the time in the world to rest and get better, but once I am better I don't look back. I was reminded about how bad I felt when a friend said, "I was worried, because you texted me about how bad you were feeling."

Which is something I don't usually do.

At the time, I was getting ready to do one of the first live music shows in Charlottesville post-pandemic. An 80s night called "Vax to the Future!", which encouraged vaccinations. My friends and I had the tunes ready, and the local health department was on hand to give people information. The show was booked during a wave a optimism about what this "hot vax Summer" would look like. But the week of the show, the worm was turning. The news of the variant was changing things up dramatically. Fortunately, our area had high vaccination rates and low infection rates, so we felt okay going forward.

Am I frustrated with having been exposed to COVID-19? Kind of. But not really. I was pretty much on lockdown for 14 months, got the vaccine at my first opportunity and followed the advice that going maskless was okay if you were vaccinated. Sure, I felt rough when I was sick but I never felt in danger, which is why I assumed it was a summer cold that I'd gotten because my immune

system hadn’t had any recent practice fighting off other human’s germs.

As we move forward with the pandemic, we all have to make the choices that feel the safest to us. When the first booster becomes available to me, I’m gonna take it. And I’ll take as many boosters as I need to moving forward. I’m thankful that I had the vaccine, that I was able to see friends and family that I hadn’t seen since the pandemic began. I’m thankful for those fleeting two and a half weeks when I allowed myself the freedom to think that life was returning to some semblance of normal, even though the rude awakening was imminent.

Ultimately, it feels impossible to “master” this pandemic, without going full-on Ted Czynski. I know for many people, disappearing into the woods to live off the land holds more appeal now than it did, say, two years ago. But as I said above, we all need to do what feels the safest. I also believe that we need to be somewhat flexible. A full-on lockdown and erradication of COVID-19 is no longer on the table. With how our planet is so interconnected, and the disparities in healthcare that persist, I’m not sure a quick stop fix to this was ever truly possible. As anyone who has worked in HIV prevention understands, humans aren’t great at preventative strategies. We search for treatments and information after the fact.

I guess what I’m trying to say is: if you’re packing up your gear to live off the land, maybe charge up the electric shaver and bring it along. Just in case you’re called back to society sooner than expected.

Regardless of where you stand on vaccinations, my hope is that as many of us make it out of this in one piece. Hell, even two pieces that are still connected by some beef jerky feels acceptable at this point. Either way, hang in there. I know I am. I’ve made it this far and I’m not gonna miss the spectacle of that giant asteroid crashing through the atmosphere or the enormous tidal wave that will wash us, and all of our ridiculous in-fighting, away once and for all.

Positively (?) Yours,

Shawn

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