

To the relevant parties,

From the beginning, COVID has been miscommunicated to the general public. I remember when the pandemic first hit and nobody had their bearings on what the virus would mean to us. Panic and fear was the general disposition of the populace in my social circle. I hadn't looked up the statistics on it a few weeks into our lockdown. My boss called me up with news of having attained exemption from the government prohibition of operation that allowed us to continue working as "essential". We needed money, and I wanted to get back to work. But I also had estimations of mortality rate ranging in the high single digits to low teens, vaguely pulled from the general vibe in online discussion. I decided to look up the statistics to help contextualize this problem and make a decision. I remember feeling lied to.

This is a virus of the elderly, and obese, on average. Not without caveats and exceptions, of course, but the prevalence of said exceptions are what's in question. Polls, time and time again, show that the general public on both sides of the political aisle *vastly* overestimate each age category's likelihood of hospitalization/death. We took a colossal economic hit for locking down in varying ways throughout the country. Closed small business and consequently fortified the corporate monoliths. And we're threatening ourselves with another large and ambiguous question mark if we introduce the precedent that mandating vaccination is an okay thing to do. These actions and policies are wildly disproportionate to the threat that the virus poses to society.

I work in the Blanchard Valley Health System. My coworkers and I are transparent with each other on our views on this front. I know that a quarter of my clinic would quit before taking the vaccine. Our beliefs are not wishy-washy. They weren't formed by a willful ignorance to the topic. Rather, they've observed the arbitrary nature in which many COVID rules were formed. They've watched them backpedal and then reinstate these arbitrary rules. They've watched health organizations speak out in nakedly political ways (one big reason that many will not care if the vaccines become officially approved). They've seen the effect that propaganda has had on the people who have trusted the "experts". I don't know how many posts I've seen of someone in their 20-40s, writing an apologetic paragraph of their pride in being vaccinated, their faith in vaccines, and their explicit lack of regret in getting the vaccine before unpacking their laundry list of debilitating side effects that they got directly from the vaccine on Reddit. It's textbook Stockholm Syndrome. We've watched the active censorship of those who have been trying to have a dispassionate and careful topic on COVID, many with comparable education and title to those who've had their authoritarian ways with us. We're not ill informed. We're apprehensive about an increasingly fervent move toward control over something that will not be controlled. All at the expense of the relevant freedom we used to enjoy. Please put a stop to this strong-armed garbage.