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Relief As Appointments Open Up

Stories of the Vax

Contributions from the 4sight Team

April 8, 2021

More first-person stories from the 4sight Health team regarding the COVID-19 vaccine.

INTO THE WORLD AGAIN

By **Ed Marx**

Vax Day: Tuesday, January 26, 2021

Location: Texas

As news of the vaccine distribution seemed imminent, my wife and I gathered as much information as we could and stayed actively engaged. There are three of us left in our household, my wife Simran and our youngest daughter, a 17-year-old with asthma. Simran is a nurse, I'm a cancer and widow-maker survivor, so we all qualified for the first wave. We dutifully registered early January with our county and awaited further instructions.

A few weeks lagged before our pediatrician called. They had the vaccine and would go ahead and begin the two-shot series with our daughter. We were pretty happy to get our daughter protected, at least. We travel a fair amount, so we were anxious for this extra layer of protection.

Simran and I received texts in late January that the county was now prepared to do mass vaccination events. Simran and I received our first dose on January 26, 2021. It was a non-event, as we expected. After testing COVID negative, we headed for the Galapagos Islands for some extreme social distancing while exploring nature.



Photo by Ed Marx

The COVID-19 vaccine was a non-event for the Marx family, ready to get back to traveling the world post-pandemic. Here, Simran Marx gets her second dose.

In early February, our daughter received her second shot. As advertised, she felt pretty sick the following day but bounced back quickly. Simran and I received dose two in mid-February. We also experienced minor discomfort the following day but since that time, we have felt great.

We received another COVID negative test and went on to Puerto Rico to explore the rain forests, while maintaining appropriate safety protocols. Even though we are vaccinated, we remain vigilante. We are off to the Inca Trail next month for more social distancing and enjoying nature.

As global citizens, we believe we must be vigilant and safe while at the same time, live. While some parts of the world may be able to shut down, the economies of smaller countries and the livelihood of many people are at stake. Travel can be done safely and the world is better for it. Get vaccinated as soon as you qualify, continue to follow safety protocols and live life.



Ed Marx is a 4sight Health Contributor, the Chief Digital Officer for Tech Mahindra Health and Life Sciences, former Chief Information Officer at the Cleveland Clinic, and a leader at several health systems.

MY LINGERING COVID-19 VACCINE SIDE EFFECTS

By David Burda

Vax Day: March 19, 2021

Location: Chicago, Illinois

As I write this, my immediate family is almost fully vaccinated from COVID-19. Here's the scorecard:

- Me: 1 of 2 doses
- My wife: 2 of 2 doses
- My daughter: 2 of 2 doses
- My oldest son: 1 of 2 doses
- My youngest son: 1 of 2 doses
- My mom: 2 of 2 doses
- My sister: 1 of 2 doses

Thanks to Pfizer, the Cook County (Ill.) Health Department, the DuPage County (Ill.) Health Department, Northwestern Medicine, Edward-Elmhurst Health and Elmhurst University for helping protect our mask-wearing, social-distancing, hand-washing and science-believing bubble from this deadly virus.

So far, none of us has had any medical side effects from the vaccine to speak of. A few sore arms and no more than 24 hours of feeling like you had the flu for others.

However, I did have an emotional side effect after I got my first dose of the vaccine a few weeks ago. It was a mix of guilt and anger.

As I sat in the observation area for the required 15 minutes, I looked around the room of about 40 to 50 people and realized that I was one of the youngest if not the youngest person waiting to be sprung. The room was filled with people in their seventies, eighties and nineties. I'm sure a few were Centenarians.

At 60, I guess my high blood pressure, high cholesterol and high BMI were finally good for something as I qualified to get vaccinated in Illinois as a 1B+.

What I was angry about was that the room wasn't filled with 16-year-olds who, once vaccinated, could go back to in-class learning in high school. I was angry that the room wasn't filled with 18-year-olds who, once vaccinated, could go to college or work after graduating high school. I was angry the room wasn't filled with 22-year-olds who, once vaccinated, could go on job interviews after graduating college.

I know the science says to vaccinate the most vulnerable first, and that's the elderly and those with pre-existing medical conditions. I get that, and I don't have a problem with it. But for me, I would much have preferred to give my first and second doses away to the young.



Photo provided by Columnist Dave Burda, here caught in the wild getting his first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

I can keep myself safe or as safe as possible until my turn comes. I work from home. I limit my trips to the grocery store, pharmacy, gas station and hardware store. I double mask. I use hand sanitizer. The young have a lot less control over their environment and themselves. They're young. And, even though they're at low risk for a severe or deadly case of COVID, they have a lot more to lose—like 60 years or more—if it does happen.

I cringe every time I hear or read that there's been only one pediatric flu death this flu season and how wonderful that is from a public health lens. I get it from an epidemiological standpoint. But if that was your kid, it's your entire world and nothing else really matters.

Reading this story in the New York Times, "[Fully Vaccinated and Time to Party: If You Are 70,](#)" and watching this Saturday Night Live bit, "[Boomers Got the Vax,](#)" only ratcheted up my guilt and anger.

Thankfully, the vaccine supply is catching up with demand, and all the 16-year-olds in high school, 18-year-olds going to college or work and 22-year-olds looking for jobs are getting immunized.

Last year about this time, I asked my mom, who turns 83 this year, what she would want us to do in case she got sick and needed a ventilator, and there was a ventilator shortage as hospitalizations of severely ill COVID patients began to climb. Without hesitating, she said to give her ventilator to someone young because she's had a good life.

We got the science right. But to me, we got our priorities wrong.



David Burda is 4sight Health's News Editor and Columnist. He's our biggest news junkie and healthcare historian, covering healthcare since 1983. He writes a monthly column, weekly blogs, and hosts the [4sight Friday Roundup](#) podcast.

SURPASSING MY LOW EXPECTATIONS

By Lindsay Morrison

Vax Day: April 1, 2021

Location: Bartlett, Illinois

I'm not a boomer, I'm relatively healthy and I can work from home on my computer. I cheer for my essential, healthcare, education, boomer, health-compromised friends as they get shots. I'd put my college kids ahead of me in an instant so they can get back to life.

I've kept my expectations for getting vaccinated really low. Working with optimists, the end of 2021 date crept up to fall 2021, maybe even July 4. I've struggled.

On April 19, everyone in Illinois 16+ will be eligible.



ON THE HUNT

To get ready for April 12, I joined the Chicago Vaccine Hunters group on Facebook on March 24. Within 5 days, I guided seven eligible friends to appointments. The husband of a college roommate, a neighbor, my spouse, a former co-worker with severe co-morbidities who I haven't seen in 15 years. Nothing serious, I'm not getting online at 11:55 p.m. for CVS, or 5:55 a.m. for Walgreens. I'm not the Vaccine Angel who has helped 347 people get appointments, and I'm not taking a shot from someone in front of me.

April 1, the end of the day, I check Facebook. I see a post about a vaccine drive in the next county over that has too many shots,

too few people signed up, they'll take anyone over 18, any eligibility. I'll take a dose that would be wasted.

The event is at a temple I don't know, [Umiya Mataji Temple](#), and it's 45 minutes away. I'd get there with 90 minutes left in the drive, but would they have doses?

I ask my 19-year-old, "Do you want to try?" We throw on shoes and masks, grab water bottles, put the address into google maps. We listen to the soundtrack of Baby Driver, a musical heist movie. The movie's main character is the getaway driver, so for us it's aspirational.



BPAS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Bartlett, IL, Photo courtesy of the temple website

One of the five pillars of the BAPS charities in the U.S. is health and wellness. BPAS is conducting vaccination drives in cities around the U.S. The temple in Bartlett, IL offered last minute-angel doses, shots that would have been wasted because of unfilled appointments.

THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

I think it's a stretch to call Bartlett a Chicago suburb. It's past the suburban sprawl, mostly homes and greenery along state routes, even a few barns. Definitely no public transportation. We almost miss the left turn lane into the place.

This is what we see.

I never could have expected this.

We're directed into what we read is the Haveli, a large assembly hall with wooden floors and chandeliers – maybe half of a football field big? Dozens of young men in white shirts and dark

pants direct us to registration at tables staffed by women in matching saris. One table to register, one for health questions and temperature. My registrar corrects herself after calling me a patient — she tries client, visitor, guest, and we agree on “people who care about others.”

We're seated in 1 of 12 lines of chairs, all facing forward, all spaced 6' apart. A nurse and helper push a cart up and down each aisle, asking each of us a few questions before giving us our shot. (Moderna) It's so well run, and so pleasant. I can't really believe it's happening.



*Photo courtesy of
www.bapscharities.org/usa/*

There's a doctor out there who gives vaccinations and keeps the customers rolling with his jokes.

BUT THAT'S NOT ALL, FOLKS

An older man picks up a microphone, at the front, takes off his mask, and introduces himself as the medical director for the sponsoring healthcare organization. He says he's going to give us important information about the vaccine. The volunteers applaud; he's clearly part of the community. And he's really comfortable in front of a crowd, and really happy to have a mic.

Doctor tells us that all the vaccines are really good, you can't beat 100% prevention of hospitalizations and deaths. We should thank the scientists and the government, and everyone part of making them. He reminds us how long we need to wait after the shot, when we should come back, that we can't let our guard down yet.

But he doesn't just give information. He peppers his remarks with vaccine jokes.

I did not expect comedy.

"If you want privacy, we have booths back there, let us know. But if you want to show off your muscles, definitely stay out here."

"Take off your coat before you sit down. We could vaccinate your coat but then you'd have to wear it all the time, and the weather's finally getting nice."

"Make sure you pull up your sleeve so the nurse can give the shot. We have a hole punch we could use for your shirt, it's even heart shaped, but sometimes it takes some skin."

"You have to wait here 15 minutes after you get your shot. The only way to leave before that is to bribe me. And I'm doctor, I don't need your money!"

"If you have to travel when you're supposed to come back in 28 days, wear a mask. Buy me a first-class ticket, I'll come anywhere in the world to give you your second shot. That's the kind of service we provide."

"You're not fully protected until two weeks after the second shot. So I don't want to see you out clubbing, especially you!" (Pointing to the lady pushing 80 and pushing a walker.)

If you were 14 to 22 years old and this was your dad, you'd be rolling your eyes. I look at my 19-year-old in the next row, and he's laughing.

As we're walking out, my son says, "That guy's got a tight five, and some of his jokes were even funny. Don't forget to tip your server!" We make a donation.

Honestly, it was the best live show I've been to in... 13 months. And the best live comedy I've seen in a decade.

All of it, timing, location, organization and entertainment, was beyond my wildest expectations. I'm looking forward to going back in 28 days. The doctor is there every Thursday.



Lindsay H. Morrison is Managing Director at 4sight Health, and a key member of our editorial team, working closely with all our contributors. She keeps the 4sight Health team in line, juggles all our great content and builds great relationships with clients.