

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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SATURDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2021

Founded October 16, 1875

A4

OUR VIEW

COVID-19 is going to be with us

Our story recently on Andrew Morris, a local man who contracted COVID-19 even after he was vaccinated, showed a man who did everything right to prevent an infection and who ended up asking, “What did I do wrong?”

Morris, of course, didn’t do anything wrong. The delta variant of the COVID-19 virus is everywhere. And, despite the fact Morris was one of the unlucky few to catch the virus even after he was inoculated, vaccinations still are the best way to avoid an infection.

Statistics from the Umatilla County Public Health Department show roughly one of out of every 50 people hospitalized with COVID-19 since January were vaccinated against COVID-19. Thus, about 49 out of 50 hospitalizations in the county this year were unvaccinated.

What that says is the protection rate from COVID-19 vaccinations remains very, very high. Are there breakthrough cases? Of course. Morris is a good example. But Morris didn’t end up in a hospital. He is ill, but his life isn’t in danger.

While we still believe the choice to get vaccinated should be an individual one, we also recognize that so far, the vaccines have performed as advertised.

The sad part of the entire vaccination drama is how a misconception — that somehow vaccines would totally prevent infection from COVID-19 — took root. Nine months or so ago, the vaccines were touted as a good answer to the COVID-19 pandemic.

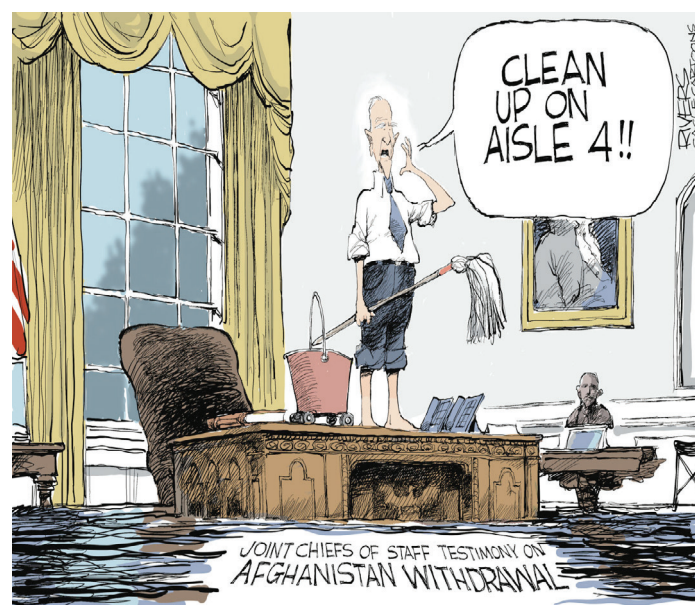
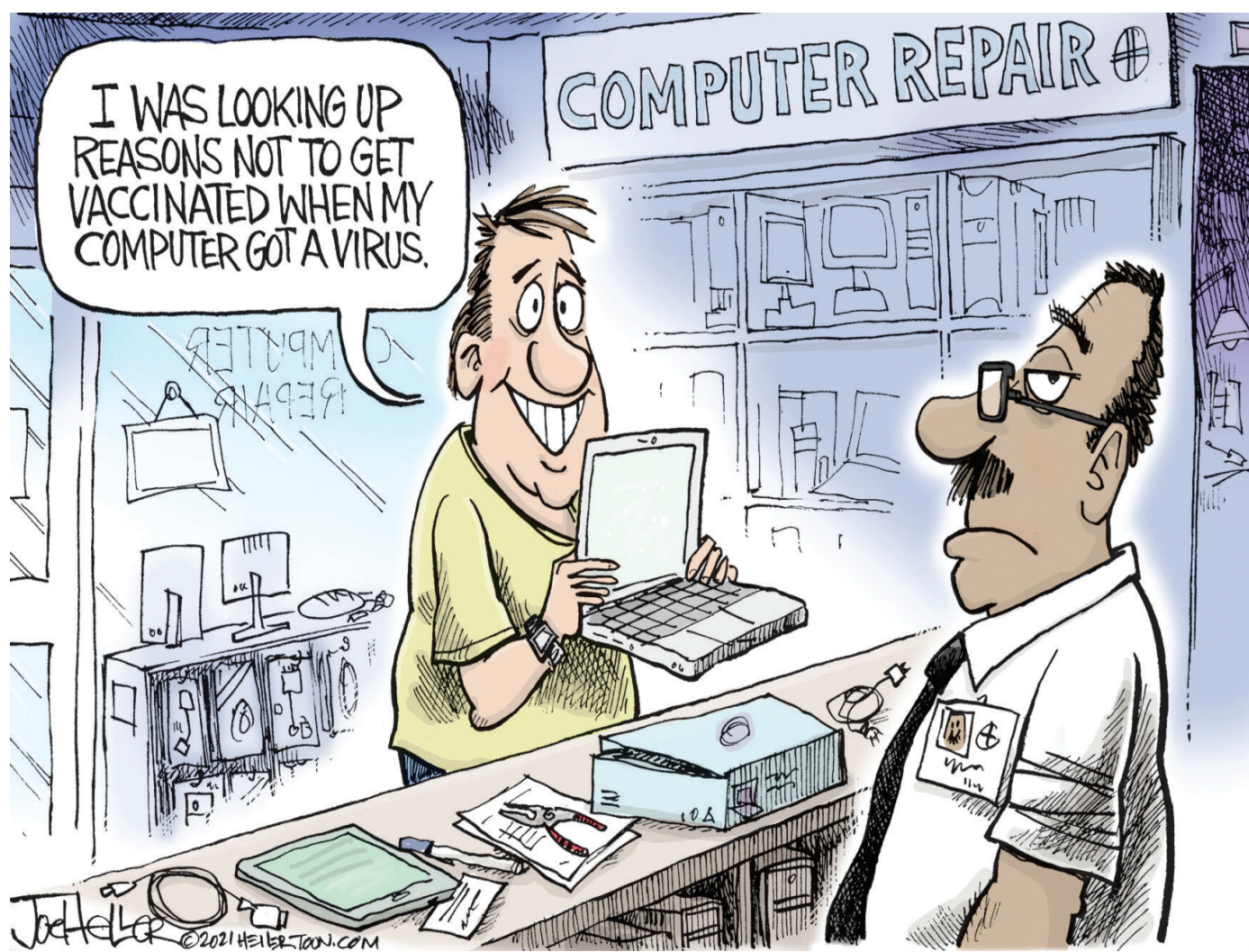
Not enough attention, though, was paid to the fact that while the vaccines were important and a good tool, they were not a silver bullet. What the vaccines do for most people is keep them free from the virus. For some, who contract the virus, the vaccine keeps them out of the hospital.

That’s why vaccines are important. While you still may become a breakthrough case, you’re most likely not going to end up in a hospital in need of in-depth and serious medical care. And breakthrough cases remain — at least for now — rare.

So far, according to the Oregon Health Authority, more than 80% of the COVID-19 cases in the state were in people who were not vaccinated.

The old rules still apply today when it comes to the COVID-19 virus and its variants. Avoid large crowds, wear a mask and if you choose to do so, get vaccinated.

COVID-19 is going to be with us from now on. We will have to learn to live it with — much like we endure a flu season each year — and continue to use commonsense measures to avoid infection.



YOUR VIEWS

Wearing a mask does not violate my personal freedom

When I was a small child I had an immunization on my arm for smallpox. I think I got it at school. There was no vaccination at the time for measles, mumps, whooping cough and I had all those diseases missing school for two weeks for each.

Later, polio vaccine and the Salk immunization came along and I got them. I do not remember whether my parents had to sign anything, but I know they did not want me or my siblings to contract polio. I have had tetanus shots, diphtheria, shingles, influenzas and a couple of others that I cannot recall. I am happy to make it to age 85.

When I had an opportunity to receive the COVID-19 vaccinations, I was grateful, because I did not want to experience the virus. I did not think about possibly spreading the disease to others. I had been wearing a mask to save myself, but now I wear the mask to save others. I know I could be a carrier even though I had the vaccine.

My personal freedom has not been violated by getting vaccines or by wearing a mask. As an adult, I made the choice to protect myself from disease. My personal freedom is not violated when I wear a mask, because I do not want to be responsible for someone else being sick.

Regardless of any requirement or mandate, I do not wish to cause harm to anyone else. I do not wish to cause health professionals to serve until exhaustion due to my disinterest in their plight. I do not want children to forfeit their education because the pandemic continues indefinitely. I do not wish to cause hospitals to fill up with COVID-19 patients making it impossible for people with other health problems to have the care they need.

Even though I am vaccinated for COVID-19 and willing to wear a mask, I want to be able to be admitted to a hospital for treatment if I seri-

ously need treatment for illness or for another face-plant injury in front of the post office.

Evelyn Swart
Joseph

Please think of those you care about, not just yourself

Protesters demand freedom from mask and vaccine mandates, claiming personal choice. For most medical decisions, I would agree.

However, the coronavirus is highly contagious and the anti-vax community chooses to ignore this fact. When you become infected, OK fine, that resulted from a personal choice not to protect yourself. But then you will likely infect a few more people — who will it be? Someone you live with? A child? Your co-worker? Someone you sit behind in church? Someone in line with you at the grocery?

I am mystified by your version of choice, which could rob others of their choice to remain healthy. Please think of those you care about, not just yourself.

By the way, Oregon and Washington have consistently been in the top 10 states for lowest incidences of coronavirus cases as a percentage of population. Oregon is currently fifth best. Our governors and their expert advisers deserve credit.

Diane Alexander
Walla Walla

I am in charge of my own health

This is America ... land of the free. I have a right to vaccinate or not, wear a mask or not. Because I don't put on a mask or won't subject myself to an unproven vaccine, does not mean that I'm a bad person, nor am I guilty of any wrongdoing.

If someone is concerned about getting COVID-19 or is compromised in any way, they should wear a mask (if masks work), social distance, get vaccinated. Take care of yourself as necessary for you. Don't stipulate what

I should do.

I'm not responsible for the general public's health, nor are they responsible for mine.

Yes, the hospitals get crowded. It's not necessarily the available beds, but the fact that there's not enough staff. Once the vaccine mandate is enforced, there is a good possibility of a huge shortage of hospital care staff. I stand behind those that choose that route. No one should be forced to take a vaccine as a requirement for employment.

Our local economy has been devastated with this mask mandate and social distancing. Let the individual decide. They can go into that business or not. It is their choice. Don't punish the businesses because they don't mandate mask wearing in their store: they should not be “mask police.”

All we hear on the news is COVID, COVID, COVID, supported by advertising to get the vaccine. It's odd to be so inundated with “vaccine rah-rah-rah advertising” when America's COVID-19 death toll is actually smaller than that of heart disease or cancer deaths.

According to news reports, COVID-19 has claimed approximately 600,000-plus American lives. Of course, we need to consider “presumed and confirmed” COVID-19 deaths (cdc.gov).

“About 655,000 Americans die from heart disease each year” (cancer.org).

“In 2020 there was 606,520 cancer deaths in the United States.” In 2021 the estimated cancer deaths are 608,570 (aha.org).

Drug overdose deaths in the U.S. in 2020 was an estimated 93,331, including 69,710 involving opioids, according to data released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Am I supposed to interfere with people's lives to keep them from getting heart disease? How about cancer? Should I run roughshod over drug dealers?

Nope. Everyone should take care of themselves.

Regarding masking and the COVID-19 vaccine ... I am in charge of my health — it's my choice.

Lesley Neuman
Lustine