A Solution to COVID Vaccine Refusal: Take the Jab or Lose Your Job

By Alex Berezow, PhD — January 5, 2021

A substantial proportion of frontline healthcare workers are refusing to accept the COVID vaccine. This poses an unacceptable risk to public health. They should take the jab or lose their job.

Ever since the coronavirus crept onto the world stage, we have been suffering from two simultaneous pandemics: One from the virus and another from mis- and disinformation. The power of the latter has now manifested as an inability to get healthcare workers vaccinated.

Unbelievably, there is evidence that a substantial proportion of healthcare providers’ staffs are not getting vaccinated. Cal Matters reports, "Between 20% and 40% of frontline workers in Los Angeles County and up to 50% in Riverside County have turned down the vaccine." This will create at least four knock-on effects in the healthcare system.

First, and most importantly, a failure to vaccinate frontline workers means that patients will be putting themselves at risk simply by showing up to the clinic or hospital. A large percentage of COVID cases are asymptomatic, which means that the virus can be spread from workers who are unknowingly infected to other staff members or patients.

Second, unvaccinated healthcare workers will exacerbate a labor shortage. Workers who get sick or are quarantined can't provide medical assistance to the public during the time of year (flu season + COVID) in which it's needed the most. Healthcare providers may choose to redeploy
workers who refuse vaccines to other departments, but the effect is the same: There are fewer workers available to treat patients.

Third, frontline workers are first in line to receive the COVID vaccine. Refusal means that precious vaccine supplies are sitting unused when millions of other people would be glad to receive them.

Finally, vaccine refusal sends a pretty rotten message: Healthcare workers don't trust the healthcare system. This can only serve to deplete public confidence at a time when it needs to be boosted.

**Take the Jab or Lose Your Job**

There is a solution to this: Make the COVID vaccine mandatory for all frontline healthcare workers. Those who refuse can find another job.

The law is very much on the side of employers in this matter. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) says [3] that employers can mandate COVID vaccines. For the exceedingly small number of employees with a valid reason (e.g., vaccine allergy, sincerely held religious belief, or a disability that makes vaccination difficult), an employer must attempt to provide a "reasonable accommodation." Working from home is not an option for many of these workers, and even if it was, it is likely that they are placing increased risk upon their co-workers, who (given the safety of vaccination) would be placed disproportionately in riskier situations.

Of course, there is precedent for a policy like this. Schools require kids to be vaccinated, otherwise they're not allowed to attend class. To end the pandemic, we may need to impose the same policy on workers in healthcare facilities.

---

**Source URL:** https://www.acsh.org/news/2021/01/05/solution-covid-vaccine-refusal-take-jab-or-lose-your-job-15252

**Links**