A Centralite's Testimony: "Why I Took the COVID-19 Vaccine"

Hello Central family!

For those of you do not know me, I am Dr. Saied Murphy, a kidney doctor in Metro Atlanta. As you can see, I am African-American, and have been impacted by the long legacy of racial discrimination in the United States as well as the current toxic and polarized political climate that we had faced in this country and which has reached a boiling point during the past 4 years. With such a backdrop, we now find ourselves amidst the most serious and deadly pandemic this country has ever faced: The COVID-19 coronavirus. When President Trump announced that we would soon have a vaccine to combat this pandemic, I was adamantly opposed to having anything to do with it since he has established an extremely poor track record of espousing causes that benefited anyone other than himself. Along with many of you, I am aware of the tragic history of African-Americans being terribly exploited as human guinea pigs during the Tuskegee syphilis experiments. So yes, taking a COVID-19 vaccine was not something I saw myself doing anytime soon.

However, along the way, something changed for me. Despite the numbers of infected individuals continuing to climb by astronomical levels in this country, I continue to watch large numbers of people, by the thousands, continue to defiantly resist the known common-sense measures of wearing face coverings, avoiding large gatherings, minimizing travel for family visits, and refusing to believe the reality of this deadly virus. As a healthcare provider, I have to go into the hospital every day to take care of some of these infected patients, many of whom have spent long periods of time without their families, some of whom have died alone in the hospital.

After long days of enduring this and being as diligent as I possibly can be, I have to go home and be in mortal fear of what I may be bringing home to my family. I lost my father this past July. So I very much wanted to be with my mother and family in South Carolina for the holidays, to love on each other to help us get through his absence at such a special time. Out of the same fear of bringing death to those that I love, I had to forego the loving embrace of my mother and sister. After 10+ months of this unrelenting ordeal, I began to rethink my attitude about getting the vaccine.

I have had numerous conversations with others about their intentions on receiving the vaccine. The vast majority of those I have spoken with were not presently planning to get the vaccine. When I was of that mindset, I said that I needed to talk to other individuals who had taken the vaccine to get their experience of having received it. Once I had made up my mind to take the vaccine, it became apparent to me that as an African-American individual (who has the capacity of independent thought), I would have to be one of those representative individuals to take this COVID-19 vaccine so my community, those who look like me, and those who find me to be trustworthy, can perhaps be less afraid and do their individual part to help us get this pandemic behind us by also becoming vaccinated.

Still here I am getting my COVID-19 vaccine! My arm was sore for a day (took a couple of doses of Advil) and I was mildly fatigued the day after the vaccine. By the following day, I was totally back to normal. But the peace of mind I have at beginning my journey toward developing immunity against COVID-19 far outweighs the brief, manageable discomfort. I hope this is of some value to my Central family. I strongly urge all of you to consult your medical providers to ensure that you are healthy enough to receive the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as it becomes available. This is one time that we should put our faith in the almost miraculous advances of science that has permitted 2 (and counting) extremely safe and effective vaccines to have been produced and approved. We must not let the noise of skepticism and politics impede our abilities to protect ourselves and our loved ones.

Your Brother in Christ,
Saied T. Murphy, MD