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Despite ‘getting it wrong’ we must continue to do what’s right

I have been wrong about the COVID-19 pandemic any number of times. During the early days of the pandemic, a colleague asked me if he should book his airline ticket to Chicago for our annual Essential Evidence conference. I told him to go ahead. The country shut down the next week.

In September of this year, I was ready to book my flight to Phoenix for a presentation at the Arizona Academy of Family Physicians annual meeting. I thought COVID-19 activity was winding down. I was wrong again. The conference was changed to virtual presentations.

There is no question that everyone in the United States—and most likely, the entire world—will eventually get vaccinated against COVID-19 or get infected with it.

And now, as I write this editorial late in November, I find myself wrong a third time. I figured the smoldering COVID-19 activity in Michigan, where I live, would wind down before Thanksgiving. But it is expanding wildly throughout the Midwest.

Wrong again, and again.

I figured most everyone would be vaccinated as soon as vaccines were available, given the dangerous nature of the virus and the benign nature of the vaccines. But here we are, more than 750,000 deaths later and, as a country, we still have not learned our lesson. I won’t get into the disinformation campaign against the existence of the pandemic and the effectiveness and safety of the vaccines; this disinformation campaign seems to be designed to kill as many Americans as possible.

The COVID-19 epidemic is personal for all of us. Not one of us has been immune to its effects. All of us have had a relative or friend die of COVID-19 infection. All of us have had to wear masks and be cautious about contacts with others. All of us have cancelled or restricted travel. My wife and I are debating whether or not we should gather for the holidays with our children and grandchildren in Michigan, despite the fact that all of us have been immunized. One of my sons has a mother-in-law with pulmonary fibrosis; he and his family will all be doing home testing for COVID-19 the day before visiting her.

■ **When will this nightmare end?** There is no question that everyone in the United States—and most likely, the entire world—will eventually get vaccinated against COVID-19 or get infected with it. We must continue urging everyone to make the smart, safe choice and get vaccinated.

There are still hundreds of thousands of lives to be saved.

JFP

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