

Local

Why I'm choosing to vaccinate



SCRIBBLER'S NOTEBOOK

By Jamie Etheridge

local@kuwaittimes.com

Kuwait is now gearing up for a nationwide vaccine campaign, the recently approved Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for SARS-COVID-19. The Ministry of Health has already begun registration on its website, where anyone in Kuwait can register. Most likely frontliners and other at-risk groups will be the first to receive the vaccine but both my husband and I have registered and will take the vaccine as soon as it becomes available.

Vaccines are a controversial topic and already people across the globe are gearing up to fight against taking it. The Kuwait government has not made taking the vaccine mandatory. I have seen reports some airports and airlines might require proof of vaccine before allowing passengers to fly, though so far this seems to be just rumors.

The choice, for now at least, seems to be in our own hands. I'm choosing to vaccinate.

Some people disagree. They are worried about how quickly this vaccine has been developed, that no one - including the vaccine makers nor the government and health authorities - know the long term consequences. They are right. There are a lot of unknowns. Taking a vaccine is a risk. Just like taking any drug or medication poses a risk.

But there is no denying that vaccines has served as a bulwark against a range of diseases like measles and polio that once ravaged entire communities, and especially vulnerable populations including children and those with compromised immune systems.

By taking the vaccine, I protect myself and my family and I also contribute to the accumulation of herd immunity that protects people - like those with allergies, the immune-compromised and pregnant women - who may not be able to take the vaccine safely. In other words, I protect myself, my family and my community.

Scientific advances have made in our

understanding of the universe, our natural world and ourselves incredible gains over the last few centuries.

Still a thousand years from now, if humans continue to exist, they may look back on our methods and think them ill-conceived and fueled by misunderstanding, superstition and ignorance. Future humans may look at us the way we regard once common practices like using leeches to bleed a sick person.

I am not a doctor nor a scientist. (There are plenty of clear, detailed explanations regarding the safety and efficacy of vac-



RIYADH: This picture taken on December 17, 2020 shows the first Saudi citizen receiving the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 coronavirus vaccine (Tozinameran) in the capital Riyadh, as part of a vaccination campaign by the Saudi health ministry. — AFP

cines. The website CDC.gov has a very helpful FAQ that answers most common questions.) But I recognize that science is the best and only way forward for humanity. It is gradual. It is imperfect. But it is also systemic and evolving. It is the only method of understanding and living in this world that aims always to improve.

When given a choice, I choose science.

Why I am choosing not to vaccinate



JUST KIDDIN', SERIOUSLY

By Sahar Moussa

sahar@kuwaittimes.net

It is a fact that since March, when COVID-19 caught the world off guard, until this day, many people have lost their health, lives, loved ones or jobs due to the pandemic. Since then, many pharmaceutical companies have been trying their best to find a vaccine against the coronavirus. Today, as the distribution and inoculation of the COVID-19 vaccine begins, the question is: Are we willing to take a vaccine whose timeframe is shorter than the virus itself? It is a very hot and controversial topic nowadays.

Just to be clear, I am neither a scientist

view this vaccine as a solution to many problems, according to Al-Qabas Arabic daily, 46 percent of Kuwaitis said they will refuse to take the vaccine, 39 percent said they will take it, while 15 percent are not sure.

You might ask what this vaccine is, or mRNA vaccine as it is called? According to CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), mRNA vaccines are a new type of vaccine to protect against infectious diseases. They teach our cells how to make a protein - or even just a piece of a protein - that triggers an immune response inside our bodies. That immune response, which produces antibodies, is what protects us from getting infected if the real virus enters our bodies.

When you read about it, it sounds like a fantastic and outstanding discovery and I have no problem with the method itself. I do understand that medicine nowadays has evolved, and humankind has managed to reach the Moon and Mars - but how can we trust a vaccine without thinking about the possibility of its long-term side effects? We usually get vaccines for preexisting diseases that were subjected to trials over an extended period of time.

I believe any vaccine should be tested for at least three to five years to make sure it is somehow safe. On the other hand, this vaccine has been tested for no more than four months, which leaves us to question its safety. Personally, I would not take this chance unless the government's laws

oblige me to do so.

In Kuwait, it is still not clear if the government will make the vaccine mandatory or not. Will the travel industry require passengers to have proof of a COVID-19 vaccination before allowing them to fly internationally? There are so many questions that only time can answer, but I do believe that people should be given the freedom to choose.

So, are you for or against the COVID-19 vaccine?

nor a physician, and I do not have any medical background. However, I am a very curious person who does not take anything for granted before I research, read and investigate it.

The health ministry announced last Sunday that the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine will arrive in Kuwait by the end of December. According to Al-Rai Arabic daily, the government is preparing to vaccinate 10,000 people a day for free, both Kuwaitis and expats. Although people