

The Science and Ethics Regarding Risk Posed by Non-vaccinated Individuals: Position Paper

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The [“Israeli Public Emergency Council for the COVID Crisis”](#) has released a [position paper](#) detailing what they call flawed assumptions and ethical problems inherent in blaming the unvaccinated for the latest wave of COVID.

The first, and possibly most frequently reported flawed assumption is that unvaccinated people get infected with COVID more than the vaccinated. The document cites [data showing](#) that “The rate of vaccinated individuals among individuals with verified COVID cases is close to and even identical to their relative proportion in the population even when sorted by age group, and even though the regulations of the Ministry of Health encourage a large number of tests among the unvaccinated.”

The second false assumption, that the unvaccinated infect others more easily than the vaccinated. Data from the [CDC](#), [Public Health England](#), and [other studies](#) demonstrate that once infected, the viral load is similar in both the vaccinated and unvaccinated. Since viral load is the most significant factor in the ability to infect others, both vaccinated and unvaccinated pose a similar risk to pass the virus to others.

The third false assumption is that asymptomatic transmission is common. The paper states [“Studies show](#) that the rate of transmission of asymptomatic persons is 20 times lower than that of symptomatic patients (who are tested and isolated anyway, regardless of their vaccination status), so that the likelihood of an asymptomatic healthy person who does not know that they carry the virus to infect another person is significantly lower than 1%”

The paper also points out that high vaccinated countries such as Iceland are also experiencing a new wave of COVID despite their very high (80% - 90%). “Therefore, unvaccinated persons are not what causes the pandemic to continue, nor do they endanger the vaccinated in that aspect. In fact, it seems that the hope of eradicating COVID by achieving “herd immunity” through vaccination of a high-enough percentage of the population has been proven to be unrealistic.”

Putting the burden on the healthcare system from the unvaccinated into perspective, In

Israel, about 3% of the hospital beds are for COVID patients. At the time of writing, about 30% of them were occupied by unvaccinated people.

In concluding the scientific arguments, the paper states:

“There is no scientific evidence whatsoever supporting the claim that non-vaccinated individuals are risking the public’s health in any way more than vaccinated people” and that “vaccination should be treated as a primary means for providing personal protection against severe illness or death, especially for persons at high risk”

Notwithstanding the lack of scientific basis, politicians, health officials, and many in the media continue to blame the unvaccinated for the latest rise of COVID. This raises a number of ethical issues that the council addressed in their paper.

These attacks on individuals’ choice not to take a medical intervention is a slippery slope. Whether it’s someone who has lung disease and continues to smoke, or a heart attack survivor who refuses to alter their diet, or, not to mention some 80% of people who don’t take the vaccine to prevent the seasonal flu. “The mission of the healthcare system is to serve the public, and it must not exercise any consideration that would restrict individual liberty.”

Health decisions should be made freely, otherwise, there will be a loss of trust between patients and healthcare providers: “Public-health policy is effective only when it is based on education and dialogue. Aggressive discourse might result in the loss of trust of significant sectors of the public, and lead to lowering the rates of other routine vaccinations that are of crucial importance.”

Blaming the unvaccinated could “foster the illusion that vaccination protects against contagion” and can result in vaccinated people thinking they are more secure than they really are.

In concluding their position, the Council writes “In a democracy, in whose core are human dignity and human rights, there is no room for calls and incitement of this kind. The right of society to protection prevails over the right of the individual to freedom only when there is a real danger (as is done in the case of violent psychotic patients, or in the very different case of prisoners). It is wrong to restrict a person’s liberty due to a remote potential risk”

“The choice of whether to get vaccinated should remain in the hands of every person, according to their understanding and values. We urge the government to immediately call for an end to the aforementioned aggressive discourse while giving explanations to the public that are scientific and accessible that highlight that individuals who have not yet been vaccinated are not a factor that perpetuates the pandemic and endangers the public.”

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