Should We Mandate Vaccines?

Mandating vaccines has been an ongoing debate in schools and workplaces around the country. Recently, the Los Angeles school board decided to mandate vaccines for all eligible students over the age of 12. Conversely, 9 states have enacted laws prohibiting vaccine mandates. The question this brings up is: should vaccination be mandated for those who are eligible to take it? I believe it should for a number of reasons, primarily since vaccines are safe, functional, and readily available.

**Vaccines are Effective**

Vaccines are safe and pose little risk to any individual. According to the CDC, all US authorized vaccines (Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson and Johnson) lowered the risk of being infected with symptomatic COVID-19 by 65% to 95% in those aged 12 and older. At the same time, vaccines reduced risk of serious hospitalization by 89%.

The vaccinated pose a significantly lower risk of transmission after contracting COVID-19 than the unvaccinated. The risk of transmission of COVID-19 is reduced by around 65% after the first dose, and around between 65% and 95% after the second dose. Therefore, by getting vaccinated, you mitigate the risk of passing it on to others. If not, then you pose an unnecessary danger to those around you. As an international school, we should have a more global mindset and be more understanding of the need for a mandate, especially since they are easily accessible and available to everyone.

Along with being effective, vaccines are almost completely safe. Side Effects like anaphylaxis (serious allergic reaction) after COVID-19 vaccination are rare and have occurred in only 2-5 people per million vaccinated in the United States. Deaths due to the vaccines are also very low. More than 369 million doses of vaccines were administered in the United States from December 2020 through August 2021. During this time, the percentage of those who received the vaccine and died because of it was 0.002%. This clearly shows the limited risk of health issues from taking the vaccine.

Death rates, although decreasing in the US, are still too high. The number of reported deaths in the US since March of 2020 is 653000. The death rate is starting to spike again; the number of deaths recorded on September 8th being around 2000. This has a direct relation to the number of people vaccinated. In Texas, the percentage of people vaccinated is between 0 and 29.9% per county, as opposed to Massachusetts where the percentage vaccinated is between 50-90% per county. In Texas the 7-day death rate per 100000 people is 6.7, whereas in Massachusetts, it’s only 1.2. In short, a vaccine mandate can help save numerous lives.

**Vaccines are Readily Available and Free**

Vaccine supply in the US does not pose a major constraint as it does in other countries. President Biden's initial goal of administering [100 million vaccine](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/03/18/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-100-million-shot-goal/)s in his first 100 days, was surpassed, reaching [200 million](https://www.npr.org/2021/04/21/989487650/biden-says-goal-of-200-million-covid-19-vaccinations-in-100-days-has-been-met) doses by day 92. By early April the United States gave out more than 3 million COVID-19 shots per day.

All vaccines are free and available at numerous health centers. Almost all hospitals and medical facilities administer the COVID-19 vaccine, as well as pharmacies such as CVS and Walgreens. Clearly, there is more than enough to support a mandate of everyone getting it. Therefore instead of refusing to get the vaccine, we should be thankful that it is accessible to us.

Of course, there are certain individuals that cannot receive the vaccine, whether this is for medical or religious regions. Some people may have severe allergic reactions to the vaccine and, therefore, should not receive it. Those with a history of Guillain-Barré syndrome and other health ailments should not receive the vaccine as it poses a risk to their health.

There are also religious reasons preventing people from getting vaccinated. There are some cases where the ingredients in the vaccine have posed a concern for religious communities. For example, there were fears among some Muslims, since Pork-derived gelatin is something that has been used as a stabilizer for vaccines to remain safe. However, spokespeople for Pfizer, Moderna, and AstraZeneca have refuted the claim that pork products are in their vaccines.

We have a moral obligation to get vaccinated. With millions of people being infected and dying around the world we must, as a community, aim to protect those around us from harm. At BISB, this entails making sure we take every precaution to help keep our classmates and teachers safe. Therefore, I believe vaccination should be mandated for those that are eligible and urge everyone to recognize the important benefits that it provides.

\*If you have any questions, thoughts or concerns you would like to share regarding this topic, please contact me at [ana\_papadimitriou@bisboston.org](mailto:ana_papadimitriou@bisboston.org)

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