

Submission to the Commonwealth Government COVID-19 Response Inquiry

Introduction:

I am a mid career healthcare professional working as a intensive care paramedic. As a concerned citizen who experienced significant post-vaccination side effects, I am compelled to submit my testimony to this Inquiry. My intention is to share my personal narrative and highlight critical issues related to the healthcare system's response to vaccine adverse reactions. I believe my experience sheds light on systemic challenges that must be addressed to ensure a more patient-centric and equitable approach to future public health initiatives.

Detailed Account of My Experience:

Following my first COVID-19 vaccination with Moderna, soon after I developed moderate chest pain (5/10) radiating towards my shoulder. This unexpected symptom caused significant alarm and prompted immediate contact with emergency services. The urgency of my condition was evident, leading to prompt referrals to a cardiologist. Despite undergoing extensive investigations, including stress echo and serial ECG assessments, definitive diagnoses remained elusive. While the tests revealed borderline troponin levels, the persistent pain and lack of conclusive explanations have had a profound impact on my mental and physical well-being. My confidence in my cardiovascular health has been significantly eroded, leaving me with lasting anxieties about my future health.

Analysis and Connection to Inquiry's Terms of Reference:

My experience resonated deeply with the Inquiry's focus on assessing the effectiveness and fairness of the Commonwealth's COVID-19 response. The dismissal of my concerns regarding the potential link between my symptoms and the vaccine reflects a broader systemic issue within the healthcare system. This dismissal exemplifies a concerning lack of individualized care and a tendency to downplay patient experiences, particularly when it comes to reporting adverse reactions to vaccines. This undermines transparency and trust in public health initiatives, potentially discouraging individuals from seeking necessary vaccinations.

Recommendations:

To address these concerns and ensure a more equitable and patient-centered approach to future public health interventions, I propose the following recommendations:

1. **Individualized Assessment of Vaccine Reactions:** Any adverse reaction, regardless of severity or perceived rarity, should warrant a thorough investigation and individualized assessment by qualified healthcare professionals. This personalized approach allows for the identification of potential risks and ensures that patient concerns are heard and addressed appropriately.
2. **Recognition of Natural Immunity:** Prior COVID-19 infection should be recognized as a valid form of immunity, offering equivalent protection to vaccination. This acknowledgment empowers individuals and promotes informed decision-making regarding vaccination, particularly for those with concerns about potential side effects.
3. **Mandatory Reporting of Vaccine Concerns:** To enhance transparency and improve data collection, healthcare providers should be mandated to record and report all

patient concerns about vaccine side effects. This data can play a crucial role in identifying potential safety signals and informing future vaccine development and rollout strategies.

4. **Transparent and Comprehensive Clinical Trials:** Fostering greater transparency in clinical trial reporting, including the publication of anonymized individual-level data, is essential to building public trust and facilitating informed decision-making regarding vaccination. This increased transparency can address concerns surrounding potential biases and promote a more inclusive approach to vaccine research and development.

Conclusion:

My experience signifies the urgent need for a healthcare system that prioritises patient-centered care, transparent communication, and individualized assessments, particularly when it comes to public health initiatives. By acknowledging the realities of vaccine side effects, implementing the proposed recommendations, and actively engaging with patients, we can cultivate a more empathetic and inclusive healthcare system that prioritizes the well-being of all individuals. This shift is crucial not only in restoring public trust in vaccination programs but also in shaping a more equitable and effective approach to managing future public health challenges.