



Canadian Covid Care Alliance  
Alliance canadienne pour la prévention  
et prise-en-charge de la covid

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**Hatred towards the unvaccinated is a result of continuing misinformation in the media about what COVID-19 vaccines can and cannot achieve.**

The Aug 26 Toronto Star front page was a disgrace to a newspaper that is proud of its inclusivity and investigative reporting. The half-hearted apology by the Star's public editor two days later was a step in the right direction. Yet, it did not address the core of the issue. The public's misconception of the COVID-19 vaccines, reflected in the hateful front page messages, is based on a misunderstanding of the function of these vaccines. A misunderstanding that is being perpetuated in the media and by public health officials and politicians.

Unlike many traditional vaccines, the currently available COVID-19 vaccines with their waning efficacy do not provide "sterilizing immunity". This type of vaccine is also called "leaky", because it cannot prevent infection with the target virus. Vaccinated persons can still carry and transmit SARS-CoV-2, just like the unvaccinated. Instead, the vaccines were developed to protect the recipient from symptomatic COVID-19. Taking the vaccine is an individual decision, in which each patient, under fully informed consent and without external pressures, weighs the benefits and risks for their own health. Sadly, this fact has been lacking in the deployment and promotion of these vaccines.

A person's COVID-19 vaccination may protect them, but does not substantially impact the health of any other person around them. Consequently, asking for someone's vaccination status, or mandating vaccines, is based on flawed logic. Mandating vaccines for healthy youth and the working-age population is particularly misguided, given the low to non-existing threat of serious COVID-19 and the potential for vaccine injury. The nature of these vaccines provides no rational basis for restrictions of bodily autonomy, medical privacy, or other civil rights. The vaccines should be reserved for those elderly and vulnerable individuals who choose to take them.

Supporting hate messaging against those who choose not to be vaccinated is not only undemocratic but it fuels the flames of betrayal, contempt, and severe moral injury between citizens. The Toronto Star has worked hard to transcend these moral failings in the past and we respectfully request a prominent, front-page letter of apology to redress them now.

Drs. Steven Pelech, Julie Ponesse and Claus Rinner on behalf of the Canadian Covid Care Alliance