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Letter to the Editor

A breath of humanity in the era of Covid-19 vaccine



Controlling the Covid-19 pandemic is a challenge during which solid collaboration is required between universities, hospitals, research centers, startups, public agencies and pharmaceutical companies – in particular, those involved in vaccine production. The challenges are huge for research, care and public health. The recent proposal by Sanofi to produce the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine is an encouraging sign [1]. Beyond interactions between large entities, individual commitments must be underscored and are perhaps not reported enough.

An 80-year-old patient hospitalized for Covid-19 in March 2020 was recruited in a prospective cohort study at Lyon University Hospitals for immune response monitoring at 6 and 12 months after onset. After the 6-month consultation and a positive result regarding the presence of Covid-19 antibodies in the blood, I received the following message: “Dear Dr V., Could you please explain to me the significance of this positive test and if I will be protected against Covid-19 in the future? If that is the case, I could postpone my vaccination and offer my vaccine to someone else who is not protected.”

More than a strong commitment of solidarity and altruism toward other individuals, this moment was a moment of hope for humanity during a busy day. Such exchange boosts the motivation of healthcare professionals and confirms the central position of the patient vis-à-vis his or her own care as well as that of others. Similarly, for blood [2] or organ donors [3], the Covid-19 pandemic is also a unique opportunity during which personal qualities could emerge. Moreover, the subject of the discussion on human kindness was a temporary interlude to dealing with the never-ending technical aspects of clinical research. Indeed, this exchange was beneficial to everyone involved.

In the case of our patient previously hospitalized for a severe Covid-19 in spring 2020, vaccine hesitancy was not a problem [4] and the issue went further. Acceptance of the vaccine had been acquired, but self-questioning pushed our patient to estimate that a fellow patient with a higher risk of infection would be more likely to gain from his vaccine. This issue is different from accepting to be vaccinated to increase herd immunity. For example, Bell et al. reported that in the UK, definitive or toward-yes acceptance of the Covid-19 vaccine for parents and their children was greater than 80% [5] and 24% of the participants argued that the reasons for accepting the vaccine was to protect others. However, protection for others by offering one's own vaccine to an anonymous individual has been less discussed. However it is possible that pandemic-associated acts of kindness could well be time-dependent determinants according to the natural history of Covid-19, worldwide access to vaccines and vaccine effectiveness.

In the context of a transmissible disease, both individual behavior and public health measures, including vaccine, will contribute to controlling the disease. The essence of this letter is to acknowledge all of the patients who agree to be part of clinical studies and their personal commitment to help fight the Covid-19 outbreak.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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