

Correspondence

COVID-19 vaccination: is it mandatory or optional?

ABSTRACT

In Indonesia, controversy about the COVID-19 vaccination is still going on, there is a group of people who believe in this vaccine, and another group chooses not to believe. There are those who support this as mandatory, but there are also those who think that this is optional. Hopefully through this letter, we can all respect the decisions of every human being who has free will and has full rights over their own life.

Keywords COVID-19 vaccination, human rights, Indonesia, mandatory

Dear Editor,

In response to the latest article on the topic of opposing views: associations of political polarization, political party affiliation and social trust with COVID-19 vaccination intent and receipt.¹ This topic is very relevant to what is happening in Indonesia today.

Controversy about the COVID-19 vaccination is still going on, there is a group of people who believe in this vaccine, and another group chooses not to believe.^{2–4} This is not for no reasons; some facts found in the field, it is proven that those who were vaccinated even more prone to contracting COVID-19 infection,^{5,6} even among them who died after being vaccinated.⁷ Scientific evidence also explains that the COVID-19 vaccine does not fully guarantee that a person will not contract COVID-19;^{8,9} moreover, the COVID-19 vaccine cannot guarantee that there will be no negative impact on the body in the next few years.¹⁰ In addition, when COVID-19 mutates to another variant, a person will continue to be vaccinated many times.^{9,11} These things have resulted in a group of people choosing to refuse to be vaccinated and take care of their own health in their own way.¹⁰

There is a case that recently occurred in Indonesia, where there was a group of COVID-19 vaccine officers who were forced to inject vaccines to a citizen who did not believe in or refused the vaccine¹² and to children.¹³ This is a gross violation of human rights. Why? Because vaccination is for those who consciously and voluntarily want to be vaccinated, they must first fill out informed consent.^{14,15} If there is someone who knowingly and not volunteered to be vaccinated, then their rights and decisions should be respected. Because this is also protected by the law in force in Indonesia,

namely the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 36 of 2009 concerning Health, especially in Chapter III concerning Rights and Obligations, in the first section Rights article 5 point (3): *'every person has the right to independently and responsibly determine the health services needed for him/herself'*.¹⁶

In this regard, the Indonesian government should be able to respect the decision of every citizen to choose every choice, whether they want to be vaccinated or not. Don't let what you do as mandatory actually violate human rights. We know that a COVID-19 vaccine is one way to go, but it is not the only way. There are many other ways that we can do together, namely by (i) *'Memakai masker'* (Wear masks); (ii) *'Menjaga jarak'* (Keep your distance); (iii) *'Mencuci tangan'* (Washing hands); (iv) *'Menjauhi kerumunan'* (Stay away from crowds) and (v) *'Mengurangi mobilisasi'* (Reduced mobilization).¹⁷ In addition, by always maintaining a healthy body by always exercising, eating healthy foods and doing fun things to increase the body's immunity.¹⁸ Hopefully through this letter, we can all respect the decisions of every human being who has free will¹⁹ and has full rights over their own life.²⁰

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Conflict of interest

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