

Don't Accept COVID-19 as an Excuse for Medical Assault

"I fear that many Americans will resist getting vaccinated against the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus," Dr. Lauren S. Grossman writes at *Stat*. "To put this scourge behind us, I believe that our nation should, for the first time ever, require all Americans — or at least schoolchildren and workers in direct-contact jobs — to be vaccinated against this coronavirus."

Grossman's prescription flies in the face of the World Medical Association's International Code of Medical Ethics: "A Physician shall respect a competent patient's right to accept or refuse treatment."

It would also violate the American Medical Association's Code of Medical Ethics. For example, "Informed consent to medical treatment is fundamental in both ethics and law" (Code of Medical Ethics Opinion 2.1.1) and "[r]espect for patient autonomy is central to professional ethics ..." (Code of Medical Ethics Opinion 2.1.2).

And canons of medical ethics aside, it's just plain wrong.

If you're muttering under your breath that I'm an "anti-vaxxer," you're wrong. I'm pro-vaccine. I'm glad I didn't face the risks of measles, mumps, polio, etc. that previous generations (and my older siblings) faced. I get my flu shot every year. I've had my pneumonia vaccine. I'll be getting my shingles vaccine Real Soon Now (I had chickenpox before THAT vaccine became available). If there's a reasonably safe and effective vaccine for something I'm vulnerable to, I want it.

In fact, I've probably had more vaccinations than you, if for no other reason than that my shot record got lost between overseas military deployments and I had to get a bunch of them an extra time.

I even got an anthrax vaccine right out of a tube marked EXPERIMENTAL: DO NOT USE ON HUMANS in Saudi Arabia in 1991. I objected to that one. I "consented" to the shot only after being threatened with court-martial if I didn't.

Which brings me to my point:

Forcing a needle or a pill into someone's body without that person's consent is no different in principle than forcing a penis into someone's body without that person's consent.

It doesn't matter how much more you think you know than the person whose consent you require, or how much more important you think your goals and priorities are than the goals and priorities of the person whose consent you require.

If you don't have consent, you're committing assault. And the medical version of assault should trigger the same social, civil, and legal penalties as the sexual version.