

New Jersey Healthcare Workers Journal

February 2022
Issue #1

The latest news, views, and announcements

INSIDE

Opening Statement

Statement from the New
Jersey Healthcare Worker
Journal author

Healthcare Testimonies

A series of testimonies from
healthcare workers across
the state.



New Jersey Healthcare Workers Journal

Melissa Alfieri-Collins RN, BSN

Inquires:
melissa.alfieri@yahoo.com

Opening Statement

- By Melissa Alfieri-Collins

In NYC, the Epicenter of the pandemic, we saw people on the streets and outside their buildings cheer and clap for the front-line heroes at 7pm each night. These are the heroes that were given the task of making medical decisions for your loved ones, but now aren't intelligent enough to make them for themselves. We are ignoring therapeutics, natural immunity, and body autonomy.

We are forcing people to go against their sincerely held beliefs in order to keep doing what they love - saving lives. Many have already walked away. How many more great healthcare workers will we lose? And who will suffer the most? Our patients.

Hear from those on the front lines that went in the danger zone, sometimes without proper PPE, to protect and save you and your families. They are now asking for your help in order to continue to maintain their livelihoods and, more importantly, their right to choose.



An Unsafe Practice

- By Lisa K.

I am a front-line worker on a unit that has become a covid unit since the beginning of this. Initially we had covid patients isolated from all others with strict guidelines to do so. Overtime, that changed to it being acceptable to double covid positives together in one room. Over the last few months, I have seen an increase in the number of patients who have come to the er for non-covid related issues, and as part of the er protocol they were swabbed for covid and told they are positive and then admitted into covid unit in a room with a fully symptomatic covid patient. How could this morally and ethically be, ok? What if there positive was a false positive and now we are exposing them...in addition, most patients sit hours or days on end in positive rooms waiting to be seen by a MD. And then discharged back to their families and community. This is unsafe practice and jeopardizes the health of the patient and all those they may come in contact with.

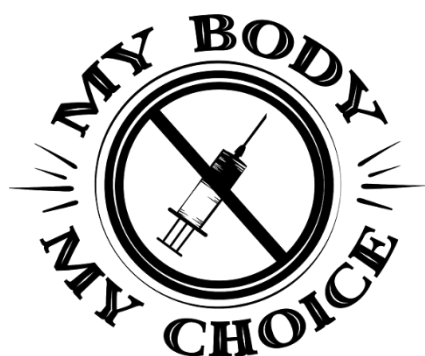
Violated

- By Andrew

I am a former non-clinical worker of 13 years at Valley Health System. I was terminated from employment on 2/4/22 for not receiving the flu shot.

Citing NJ state law passed in January 2020, my employer told me religious exemptions will not be accepted (only medical). I submitted my religious exemption to the flu shot anyway. Before being terminated, I was accommodated via working from home as my sincerely held religious beliefs prevented me from receiving the covid-19 vaccine as well.

This is truly disappointing as I know the Supreme Court recently and explicitly stated religious exemptions to the covid-19 vaccine must remain in place. The same standards apply to the flu shot. My 1st and 14th amendment rights have not only been infringed upon but blatantly violated.



"I do not consent"

- By Jodi Lynn Collins

I am a frontline worker, a nurse. I have been exposed to Covid-19 from the very beginning. I do not consent to any additional medical intervention or mandates.

Jodi Lynn Collins LPN 30 years of Nursing

Testimony from a Nurse Anesthetist

- By Jill Izzo

I am writing to share why I will not receive a booster or any additional COVID-19 vaccines even at risk of loss of my employment and also to urge the retraction of the mandate of all vaccines and boosters associated with COVID-19 for all healthcare workers.

A little bit about me:

I am a Nurse Anesthetist working in two of the larger healthcare systems in New Jersey. My job specifically puts me in the line of fire with all things airway/respiratory.

My personal health background includes an autoimmune disorder that has intermittent flares. These flares can cause significant fatigue, malaise, body and joint aches and compromised immune function. I have been managing this condition since 2014.

My spiritual held beliefs are aligned with Buddhism which has a balance of in service for others and self-care - keeping the body working towards a balance of purity of mind, soul and body.

After receiving the first dose of Pfizer in 2020, I had a "dead right arm" for 5 days with significant swelling for approximately 1.5 week. I had body pains, mild joint aches and fatigue for about four weeks. Three months later, although hesitant, I received the second Pfizer shot which resulted in 8 plus weeks of significant joint pain/stiffness as well as excessive fatigue. My job and my daily life require the use of my body, the ability to walk and use my hands. I would wake up some mornings where I could barely move my hands, my joints and body would be screaming at me. I am an otherwise daily active person and I had to stop most activities except walking and even then, that was a chore. I would just grin and bear it through my shifts at work. On my yearly visit with my PCP, who has been taking care of me for about 20 years and pro-vaccine, agreed to no more additional doses with my side effects and existing autoimmune disorder.

I did my due diligence by receiving the two-dose vaccine to be of service to others and to the community. However, after having significant side effects, my own health and decisions on my health take precedence. No mandate will ever change that. I would rather lose my job and move to another state to work or change my profession (after over a decade of putting myself through the education to achieve this position) than be forced to take something that causes me harm because a politician decides it so. Forcing a mandate with no further exemptions is like a slap in the face to all healthcare workers who have endured the multiple waves of this pandemic. The emotional, mental, spiritual and physical taxation COVID has caused and then to add on the stress of being forced to take boosters or lose your job after everything is disheartening and disturbing. Since the vaccine nor the booster led to anything close to 100% immunity, it should be an option not a mandate. The healthcare system is already crippled and will continue to lose more healthcare workers like myself.

With Regards,

Jill Izzo

MSNA, BSN, CRNA, APRN, RN-CCRN

Testimony from an Unvaccinated RN

- By Allison Y.

I am writing to share my experience with you regarding my position as an unvaccinated Registered Nurse at a local hospital. My name is Allison Y. I have been a nurse since 2001. In my over-20-year career, I have never experienced anything like what we are living today. I am a very healthy, masters-prepared, critical care certified RN and have worked in the cardiac critical care specialty for over 15 years. Upon receiving notice from my employer that I was being mandated to take the Covid vaccination, I felt that I had no other way to escape this experimental gene modification therapy than to file for religious exemption (RE), which is a truly held belief of mine. In the most recent years and since being mandated to do so, I have been against being forced to take the flu shot. I don't believe anyone should be forced to take any medical treatment against their will, but I caved, to keep the peace and my employment. The Covid shot was pushed out too quickly and did not undergo the full many-years long safety studies and this is where I draw the line. No one will force me to inject a foreign substance into my body that has inadequate safety and long-term data. Thus, I hired an attorney and filed for RE. Upon first notice, my manager was angry; however, I was told that I need to do what is best for me. I responded, yes, I do. Since that moment on, I waited to hear from our HR department as to whether I would still be employed as they threatened to separate from us.

I was not able to share my RE experience with anyone that I worked with because they constantly ridiculed those who were unvaccinated and I felt it would be easier for me to remain confidential in my decision. On a daily basis, I was routinely asked if I got my shot or when I was going. How did I do afterward? When is your second dose? My coworkers with whom I have to work very closely in very critical, life-saving situations were all harassing me at work, and they didn't even know it. I was lying to them (which is very difficult for me) and walking away from them mid-conversation as I was trying to avoid more discomfort over the never-ending vaccination dialogues. I lost many hours of sleep at night worrying about whether or not my bi-weekly testing would come back positive. If it did, everyone would find out that I was unvaccinated or "dirty" in their minds and I would have to abandon them for the required unvaccinated quarantine time. My department is small and the staff including me are not easily replaceable. Then the second dose time came. The conversations started all over again. Harassment at work is not about the intent of the conduct, but it is the impact of the conduct that makes it harassment. In my mind, I am being harassed, but no one knows about it. Over and over again, I have to listen to co-workers and physicians pass judgement on others, those who are unvaccinated. All the while... I am thinking you are talking about me. It is my choice. The daily feelings of harassment and being judged by others gets old. Then the childhood vaccines roll out. Everyone asks if I am getting my kids vaccinated. They are so quick to ask your personal information. It is so upsetting as it is none of anyone else's business, so I try to distance myself from those who I have worked with for the past 15 years because they won't understand and have made it very clear how they all feel. Then comes the flu shot. The discussions bubble up again, then the booster, then the Governor's mandate. The not-so-silent harassment is never ending. The hiding and ducking out of conversations to avoid them knowing my truth - that I believe in my innate immune system. The bi-weekly testing on my days off has made every day of mine tethered to Covid vaccines in some form or another. I can never escape it.

I now officially hate healthcare. I resent the entire medical system, the unforgiving doctors, those full of judgement, the employer, the government mandates. It has no forgiveness. I no longer want to be a nurse. I don't find the enjoyment that I once did in caring for others. In fact, I resent it. I resent going to a place that is forcing people to do things they don't want to do. I have nightmares weekly. I wake up sometimes and think it was all a bad dream. I dream that it is announced that Covid is over, and we can all resume our normal lives. I am tired of having Ethylene Oxide doused swabs up my nose. I am tired of it all. I am tired of having to make up stories about why I am waiting to eat my lunch because I am forced to eat alone. I am tired of talking about wearing masks. I am tired of wearing masks. I am on a new mission to find something else to do with my life. Something that will bring me great joy. I love my family and am trying to find a way to provide for them and at the same time not feel accosted at every turn. I hope those that are in power are happy with the end result of all of this. They have ruined the lives of so many... in ways they will never know or understand.

Testimony from a Physical Therapist

- By Erin S.

I am a physical therapist with twelve years' experience currently working in the acute care/hospital setting. As a dedicated healthcare worker, I strive to serve my patients with dignity, expertise, compassion, and sound judgment. I have great joy in empowering my patients and their families.

This Covid-19 pandemic has brought many challenges for us all. For two years healthcare workers have selflessly put themselves face-to-face with this virus out of dedication to our communities and loving service to others. On a daily basis we evaluate, treat, analyze, change, and implement top care to the best of our ability in each patient situation.

This past Spring when my hospital announced it would be one of the first in NJ to mandate the Covid-19 vaccine under EUA, it caused an overwhelming pressure like I've never witnessed before. Some were eager and made their own personal healthcare decisions to receive these shots, and I am glad they had that choice. I have a personal, sincerely held religious objection to receiving these vaccines, but other co-workers were under duress feeling they had to submit to authority despite not wanting these injections in their bodies.

Co-workers were sharing their stories of crying while getting their shots, having anxieties keeping them up at night, feeling confused about what to do because they couldn't lose their job that supports their family. Many were questioning the speed at which this became mandated with just a few months of being on the market, many were questioning the claims of "completely safe" without any long-term data to go by. There was so much unknown, but fear and coercion won.

Early in my professional career, a profound mentor once told me, "It is your job to educate your patients on benefits and risks of treatment and no treatment, and it is up to the patient to make their own decision, even if you think it, is a bad decision." Informed consent, giving patients the right to choose care or deny it, or seek a second opinion in order to generate their decision, is critical in-patient autonomy and healthcare practice.

Now, here we are nine months later since our first mandate, being demanded as healthcare employees, to comply with a booster shot. What is the environment like in my hospital? Well, many of our already "vaccinated" employees have become sick with the virus the vaccine did not protect them against which caused worse staffing shortages than we already had. Some co-workers share their stories which includes getting the first two shots just to make it easier for themselves and are now finding they do not want to give in to the coercive and bully-like pressure again. I am witnessing colleagues who had the first two shots, then had Covid-19, also do not feel comfortable getting a third shot right now. But again, the mandated pressure leaves many feeling helpless.

I recently was speaking with a young nurse co-worker, who got vaccinated with the first two shots, then got sick with Covid-19, and several months later recently had Omicron. Now, this person is being told to get the booster, and they have no say in

their own medical decision. This nurse asked a hospital doctor in my presence, "will I get myocarditis from the booster shot?" and the doctor chuckled and said, "well, no I don't think so, but if you do get myocarditis, you will just have a little chest pain."

Where there is risk, there must be choice.

Healthcare workers want the same ability we give our patients, to give true informed consent, weighing all benefits and risks, and make healthcare decisions for ourselves.

As a person who is unvaccinated due to personal sincerely held religious beliefs, I feel discriminated against. I have been considered in close contact with vaccinated co-workers who have Covid, and I have witnessed colleagues get sick and spread Covid-19 despite vaccination status. Despite knowing I don't have Covid when I go to work because I am tested twice a week, I have been told I am a threat to other staff and patients, could not attend holiday gatherings,

and have to sit away from coworkers for lunch. Despite knowing vaccination does not stop infection or transmission, only the unvaccinated are tested.

I consider myself to be a warrior for my patients, and I take pride in my skills to empower them. Just as I cannot sit back and allow an injustice to occur on behalf of patients, I also cannot sit back and watch an injustice occur on my co-workers and colleagues. Healthcare workers should have the ability to make their own healthcare choices, which includes vaccination. We too deserve the right to determine what is best for ourselves, especially now two years into this pandemic and seeing what we see about vaccination status' absent effect on infection and transmission.

Healthcare workers who selflessly give of themselves daily, deserve the same right to informed consent as we give to our own patients, and to threaten their job over this causing mental anguish and duress is appalling.

With great respect, I urge reconsideration of this mandate and a voice for all healthcare workers. The hospital environment is a safe environment for our patients, where we use proper PPE and standard precautions at all times. Healthcare cannot afford to lose dedicated experts, nor allow for authoritative pressure to coerce employees into medical procedures against their will.

Thank you for hearing my experience and concerns.

Healthcare Testimonies

Doing my "Part"

- By Stacey Westrich

I got both initial vaccines right when they became available to health care workers. I felt uneasy because of how quick the studies were done. 95% safe against covid sounded too good to be true. What are the long-term risks here? But I rolled up my sleeve, I wanted to do my "part". But also, was swept up in the excitement that was coming from my health care friends that we had a solution.

Fast forward one year. Since then, I've had shingles (at 35 years old), and had more colds

And stomach viruses than ever. I also have had Covid.... Recently. I otherwise am a healthy adult.... And recovered fine. I have zero need to take a booster... I don't want to further mess with my immune system after having so many illnesses this year. Most importantly I certainly have natural antibodies now - nothing to "boost".

But more than that I am terrified at the direction this country is headed. Mandates, losing my right to choose, vaccine cards? I've had enough! No more.

I am fearful I will lose my job because I took the first vaccines without a fight. I have been in health care for 12 years. I honestly don't know where or what else I want to do for a living. My heart is broken, I feel defeated. But I am here to find some direction and try to take power back!

Healthcare Testimonies

Terminated

- By Melissa Casamassina, RN

I began my nursing career in 1996 at The Valley Hospital in Ridgewood. I worked every other weekend as a nursing assistant (that's what we were called back then) on the orthopedic unit while I was finishing up my nursing degree. When I passed my state boards the following year, I was hired as a RN on that same unit. I later transferred into the float pool, a position which had me working every unit in the hospital. I left in early 2003 when pregnant with my third child and returned in 2006. My entire career as a Registered Nurse has been at Valley.

Back around 2014 or so, Valley instituted a policy that mandated flu shots. If you didn't get one, you became ineligible for bonus and merit increases. There was no mention of mask wearing like other hospital systems required for those not getting the flu shot. I declined getting these shots. I never sought a religious exemption because I didn't feel that my employer had any right to know what my beliefs are. So even though I always had positive annual performance appraisals, I went many years without a raise.

I was a per diem employee. This means that I was required to work a smaller number of hours per schedule. It also meant that I was not eligible for PTO, vacation, or health benefits.

When Covid hit in March 2020, I felt it was my duty to step up to the plate, that I had a skill set that was needed. Eighty percent of the patients at Valley were Covid positive. I worked near full time hours during the beginning of the pandemic. As a float nurse, I worked every covid unit in our hospital. And although I was never symptomatic, I tested positive for antibodies on April 23, 2020.

In early 2019, Governor Murphy stated that hospital employees were mandated to get the flu shot or face termination. At this time, I applied for a religious exemption so as to not lose my job. My religious exemption was approved in December 2020.

When covid vaccines were first mentioned within the hospital, I contacted Human Resources to find out what I needed to do to have my religious exemption updated to include the covid vaccines. After months of run around and the inability of HR to provide me with a policy that they were asking me to acknowledge that I understood, I was told that although they believed my sincerely held beliefs, the hospital was unable to accommodate my RE. I was told I put people's lives at risk, and I posed an undue hardship to the organization.

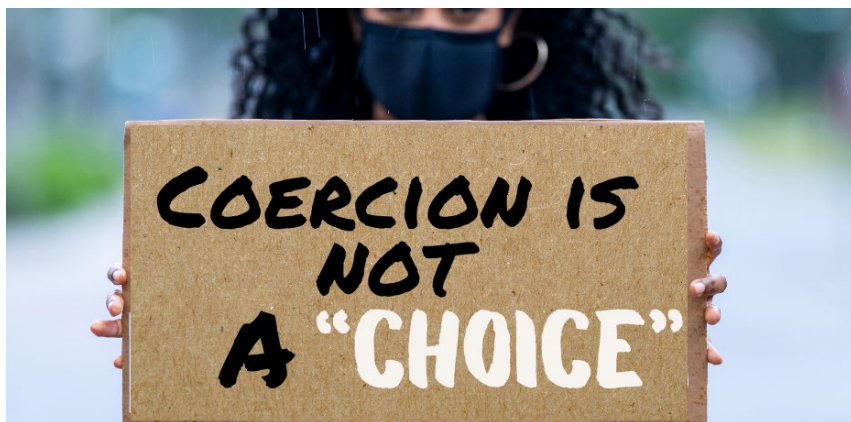
I guess Valley feels that masks don't work, but they were good enough at the height of the pandemic when I put myself directly in contact with Covid positive patients. Given that the science has now shown that even those who receive the shots can get and transmit the virus, how did I pose a greater threat, especially given that I was being subjected to weekly covid testing?

I was placed on unpaid leave on November 1, 2021 and instructed to seek alternative employment within the hospital. What that meant was that I needed to find a position that could be performed 100% remotely. Although I applied for 6 different positions, I was turned down for all of them.

I was notified on January 18, 2022 that I was terminated effective December 31, 2021.

To say that this has been a stressful and heartbreaking situation would be an understatement. I miss my coworkers and I miss my patients. And if I'm being honest, it's a real loss for Valley, I'm very good at my job.

God has protected my health for my entire life, and I believe that he will continue to do so for as long as I am walking on this Earth. No one, not a hospital system or the government, has the right to force me to do something against my beliefs. God has something bigger planned for me.



Consequences

- By Anonymous RN

I'm a registered nurse at Morristown Memorial Hospital. I have been a nurse for 13 years. I work in critical care and have taken care of and treated COVID patients. I have an autoimmune disease. I received both doses of the Moderna vaccine last year once they were available to healthcare workers. The reaction my body underwent was a heightened immune response that flared my disease. As a consequence, I needed to change the medication I had been taking for 8 years. I used steroids and high doses of anti-inflammatory to cope with the pain, but with little success. I was in excruciating pain for over a month. My hands were swollen and useless. I was in incapacitated, and everyday tasks became a real challenge. To this day, I still have residual numbness in my legs. This was a traumatic experience to say the least. I am concerned with my quality of life if I get additional COVID vaccines. Furthermore, I'm currently pregnant, in my 2nd trimester. Governor Murphy's mandate requires me to get the booster vaccine or lose my job. I've consulted all my physicians, and no one feels comfortable signing the medical exemption, although they agree I had a severe reaction. I'm stuck. It's very dangerous to have a severe flare during pregnancy. My OB supported my decision to hold off on the booster vaccine, but he does not have the ability to sign off on a medical exemption. I'm left alone. What can I do? I should have the right to choose what I put in my body, especially when pregnant, and the risk of having an adverse reaction is likely.

Testimony from a Hospital Pharmacist

- By Elias Cho

My name is Elias Cho and I'm a hospital pharmacist at Morristown Medical Center. I never received the vaccine, and I will never get it. My wife, who is also a hospital pharmacist, was forced to get this vaccine in order to keep her job. People should not be forced to get vaccines in order to work and keep their livelihood. As data worldwide has shown, it is the most dangerous vaccine ever released to the public, in history. Not only that, by design, the vaccine cannot prevent transmission as it does not give mucosal immunity.

These mandates not only violate our God given human rights, and are crimes against humanity, but at their very core anti-science. The mandates ignore legitimate medical exemptions and natural immunity. Ignoring natural immunity itself is no different from believing the earth is flat. It's scientifically and morally bankrupt. Numerous studies and a 2000 plus year history has shown that natural immunity is life long, but also far superior to the covid vaccines. The vaccines barely give antibodies for up to 3 months, to then dropping off sharply into negative vaccine effectiveness. My wife and I also had Covid. We have natural immunity. We do not need any medical interventions to be forced upon us by the anti-science government, healthcare systems, or anyone else.

Our God given rights to our bodies cannot be violated and are the basis for all freedoms. People who try to take them away, like Governor Murphy, can never be tolerated, and must be fully incriminated for numerous crimes against humanity and our Constitution. History will judge all those who imposed these mandates to be among the most evil among mankind.

Healthcare Testimonies

Fear

- By Tiffany Arielle

My grandmother died from covid in Oct 2020. I watched her make her own decision to cease intervention, watched as they hooked up the morphine, watched as she went into that morphine sleep. I watched as her body foamed blood at the mouth as she filled with fluid. I had to watch through a window, unable to comfort her (and let's face it, myself) ...I only got to talk to her on the phone. She waited until I had left to pass away. The amount of guilt for that, although not something I was able to help, is incredible. This is important as it played a part in my personal decision on NOT to be vaccinated. Even having watched that, my desire to not override my personal beliefs took precedence. So many people were, are in this situation.

I am a nurse. I never imagined my job, my livelihood, my calling, being put at risk due to a FORCED medical procedure. We never stop caring for patients- no matter if they choose to stop treatment, continue to ask for treatment despite their own non-compliance...never. We don't judge and our job is to educate to help them make an INFORMED decision for their care. We do NOT force things on ANY patient as we all have rights...which, if you didn't know, the Patient Bill of Rights is plastered everywhere in a hospital. But it certainly doesn't appear to be applicable here.

Nearly everything that is being said about this covid vaccine initially is proving to be untrue at some level. While yes, some people may have benefit from it and not be as ill (which we will never know the absolute truth with that) ...it is NOT stopping transmission. That was the initial tout- get this to stop the transmission. It is NOT doing that at all, so how can this continue to be forced on medical/hospital personnel at all levels "to protect the vulnerable"?! My overall vaccination status has zero bearing on anyone else. The shot is supposed to protect the person who chose to receive it and it does not protect others at all. If it were really about "protecting the vulnerable", ALL medical/hospital personnel would have been made to take a covid test, not just those who weren't vaccinated. Healthy lifestyle should be advertised and encouraged, not pharmaceuticals. My facility had gone all of 2020 and nearly all of 2021 without a SINGLE covid test on employees unless symptomatic, now I need to do it weekly because of my religious beliefs.

Mandating boosters....no one should be FORCED to continue on with an unproven series. If someone wants to continue on, that is great, but it should not be forced in order to sustain your job and livelihood. Where does it stop? Forced hysterectomy? Forced vasectomy? Forced birth control? Forced anything should not be okay and should not be tolerated.

I received J and J out of fear of having to drop out of school. I was told no exemptions would be accepted for the nursing program I am in. The night of (and for 18 nights straight) I had terrible nightmares. The details are twisted. I began losing lots of hair about 3-4 weeks after the vaccine. And I STILL have terrible brain fog. I literally missed an important funeral and showed up to the church the following day with no one there. Sounds silly but I was heartbroken.

Testimony from an Occupational Therapist

- By Anonymous

I am an Occupational Therapist in a NJ nursing home. I have been working all along through this crisis. I am against getting the vaccine for religious and for personal reasons. Thankfully, my religious exemption was accepted. I want to keep my job and not have to live in the fear that I had until my exemption was approved and still have fear about what may happen next to jeopardize my job. No one should be faced with the fear so many of us have lived with. No one should have to choose between a vaccine they do not want and their job. Three months ago, I contracted Covid from a family member. I strongly believe that natural immunity needs to be considered as protective as the vaccine. There are studies that show it is more protective than the vaccine, yet vaccines are still pushed on those who have had Covid. Please help put an end to the vaccine mandates.

Healthcare Testimonies

Testimony from a Physician's Assistant

- By Megan Elizabeth

I am a physician assistant in Northern NJ. I actually work for a private practice physician who has not mandated its employees to get vaccinated however we do weekly surgeries and consults at the Hospital, and I was mandated last Fall to get vaccinated or else resign despite having already had Covid in March 2020. I was told by HR that they would review my RE and determine if it deemed as true or if I was an "undue burden on the institution". I didn't receive a timely response to my submitted RE despite many phone calls and was unable to financially hire a lawyer.

I unfortunately took the J&J on the last day of the deadline in September as I felt that was the lesser evil of the vaccines available. I did so solely to keep my job and be able to provide for myself and pay my bills. I became very sick after the shot and missed two days of work. To be honest, I haven't felt myself since. Unfortunately, after getting vaccinated, HR mailed me a temporary religious exemption which expired on 12/31. I am a young health woman in my early 30's and do not have underlying health conditions. I haven't had children yet and the thought of continuing to inject a vaccine into my body makes me physically sick to think about when there no long-term data regarding the side effects and potential consequences of these vaccinations. Not to mention, big pharma not being held accountable for any adverse events.

The hospital has now mandated we get boosters by 2/28. I am already overly anxious about the thought of this and reached out to HR regarding my temporary exemption as I never received anything further and presented them with again another letter explaining why the booster was against my Christian beliefs and how the risks of getting a booster outweigh the risks of contracting Covid for a second time. My question is - what happened to my body, my choice? I should not have to choose between a profession I love and providing for myself/family and being mandated to get a vaccine. The media has overstepped and fear mongered so many people it is insane. I have patients who did not leave their homes for a year strictly out of fear.

The survival rate of surviving Covid in my age group (20-49yo) is 99.98%. When I checked the VAERs Covid report on 1/7/22 the data is unbelievable and complete opposite of what politicians, and the media are presenting to the American people. According to that report, there have been 21,745 deaths, 1,033,994 adverse reactions, and 808 birth defects from Covid vaccines. To put this in perspective, the report also states there were 9,461 deaths, 868,271 adverse reactions and 190 birth defects documented from ALL OTHER VACCINATIONS FROM 1990-present. This data blew my mind! The data does not support mandating these vaccinations but there are so many brainwashed people who refuse to listen or are so afraid of getting this virus that they would literally do anything to prevent that. It's insane.

I do not Consent

- By Jodi Lynn Collins

I am a frontline worker, a nurse. I have been exposed to Covid-19 from the very beginning. I do not consent to any additional medical intervention or mandates.

Jodi Lynn Collins LPN 30 years of Nursing

The Silence of the Nurses Association

- By Anonymous

The New Jersey State Nurses Association stated mission "is the voice of New Jersey nurses advocating for the nursing profession and the advancement of quality healthcare." Advocacy means standing up for what you know to be true and right for your patients and your profession. Where are our nursing leaders and advocates now?

Governor Murphy's latest mandate has insulted healthcare professionals from the environmental staff to doctors. In early 2020, at the start of the pandemic, we were the ones that rose from bed, put on our scrubs, and went to work, just like any other day. We went to work with a background and vast knowledge of science and were told, "No you can't wear masks, it will scare the patients." Then, in April 2020, we were told to wear surgical masks even though we all know that surgical masks don't stop viral particles. Only N95 masks stop viral spread. We asked for full-fitting goggles, booties, and hair coverings for COVID+ patients, in order not to bring the potentially deadly virus out of rooms causing further spread to staff and other patients, but were told, "No, the CDC doesn't recommend."

Then, with the release of the experimental vaccine, we breathed a sigh of relief. Finally, we won't have to worry about bringing this virus home to our families or spread it to our other patients. Six months later, that was a lie. When the vaccinated started to be infected with COVID, we all started to look around. Almost all of my staff has had COVID, and we are vaccinated. Huddle boards were changed from unvaccinated and vaccinated counts to just COVID+ staff. Why? What is not being told?

Nursing is a science. Am I not supposed to use science to question these things anymore? (I am required to question a doctor's orders if I feel it is wrong and could lose my license if I don't.) Myself and others are feeling that we must just follow along, like a good worker bee, with no value, no say.... No one in administration wants to hear it, not one wants to answer questions, no one cares.

Governor Murphy accused healthcare workers in this state of being selfish. When did the definition of selfish change? Did I miss it when the CDC changed the definition of a vaccine and herd immunity? I must have been too busy getting up for work every day in a pandemic to provide care to patients while not being properly protected from a deadly virus. I was too busy trying to calm staff when they were told "re-using PPE is safe, just put it in a brown paper bag." This recommendation caused nurses and other professionals across the country to contract and die from COVID.

I worried constantly that I would bring this virus home to my family. After being directly coughed on, I was forced to sleep and live in my basement for a month when I had COVID, out of fear that my husband child would get sick.

CDC recommendations went back to one mask and done. Governor Murphy spoke to us like we were animals you take to the vet. Prisoners in prison have more bodily autonomy than healthcare workers. Let that sink in..... prisoners, murders, rapists, have more autonomy over their bodies than healthcare workers. How are we supposed to feel? Heroes to zeros is exactly how myself and other healthcare employees feel.

Where are the leaders in our nursing organizations? Why aren't then standing up to say "NO?" No, to improper PPE, no to the never ending non science coming out of the CDC. They are only advocating compliance. We have been let down by our leaders when we need them the most.

I have spent 20 years in nursing. I love it, it is my calling. Thinking about being fired over not wanting to receive a booster vaccine for a virus, that I have had, and was told I wouldn't get because I was vaccinated. What am I to do if this booster, which my doctor advised against due to my being diagnosed with long term neuro COVID issues, reactivates these issues? After 5 months, my symptoms are finally dwindling. I can exercise again without being in pain for days, among other symptoms. This brings me to tears. My feelings are the same as many of my co-workers. You can see it in their eyes. But, like the last 3 years, no one in leadership will stand up and demand we be treated with respect and common decency.

After speaking to my doctor on the phone, she said she would make a case for an exception, but my hospital system pulled down the medical and religious exemption paperwork, before they released their email stating no more medical and religious exceptions. (What are they afraid of? Has Governor Murphy threatened them with his campaign against healthcare professionals?)

I have called a lawyer too. Why? Because my health takes precedence, and I will fight to keep my job. I have to at least try.

The silence of my nursing profession advocates after Governor Murphy's mandate announcement on January 19th, is disheartening and frankly, vile and disgusting. Shame on nursing's supposed leaders. Not that much is expected after 3 years of improper PPE, 3 years of inadequate protection.

I hope our officials and associations receive thousands of emails. We as nurses need to start advocating for ourselves. Immune systems are real. Antibodies to COVID are real. Everyone deserves the basic right to decide what is best for them.

Healthcare Testimonies

Yet another Mandate

- By Anonymous

I am a Registered Nurse in the State of New Jersey. At the very first talk of vaccinations against covid my coworkers and I in the healthcare setting thought it would be at least 5 years before we would be advised to get the vaccine. We thought we had time to figure things out, see if the trials worked, and then we could decide. However, the time came much quicker than we had ever anticipated. Effective July 26, 2021 our healthcare system came out with a statement that enforced the Covid-19 vaccination mandate. All employees needed to receive the 2nd dose by October the 15th in order to be in full compliance otherwise it would be considered a voluntary resignation leaving us no other choice. I felt conflicted, let down, and unsure what my next move was. Because I had received the flu vaccine in the past, I was advised a religious exemption would essentially "be tossed out."

My co-workers and I were so upset. We started a petition; we wrote letters to our CEO with how we felt and why we believed we should have a choice. Essentially, they listened to our concerns and held a video conference. The conference consisted of doctors and upper management telling us how safe the vaccines are and that the vaccines which are backed by science comes above our feelings. That we owe it to our communities, families, and patients to keep them protected. We asked many questions, had so many concerns as each individual had their own reasons, situations, and health issues pertaining to a new vaccine series and we wanted the right to choose. We were basically told we do have a choice, and it's a choice we have to make. "It's a hard choice, but ultimately it is our choice. Take the vaccine or voluntarily resign."

We were backed into a corner. Thankfully we have a nurse's union that we could go to. This was our next step and our last resort. If we could get the nurses' union to back us, we thought we stood a chance. After all, that's what they are there for, right? We reached out to the nurses' union, we sent emails, Facebook messages, and gave copies of the signed petition with all the names of staff who believed in choice. Even those who were voluntarily vaccinated signed because everyone deserves a choice! As nurses we are taught from the very beginning of our nursing journey that everyone has a choice when it comes to making medical decisions. Even if a cancer patient can be saved but refuses chemo. If a Jehovah's Witness refuses a blood transfusion that would save their life, it's their choice and we are not to judge or try to intervene. For us the right to choose does not exist.

In the following days after reaching out to our nurses' union, they were hesitant to respond. On August 13, 2021 they finally sent a correspondence. Stating the following:

NJNU will be meeting again with the hospital on September 18th. We will keep you updated. NJNU/ CWA supports vaccination but we also must represent and defend our members' choice to vaccinate or not.

We finally had a little hope that we could challenge the mandate with the help from our union. However, the fact that the union would be holding a meeting so late in the month of September left us feeling somewhat defeated. The meeting was to be held Sept. 18th. Which means we would have to at least get the first vaccination in order to be in compliance in case the meeting went south and we were ultimately forced by the healthcare system.

So many decided to quit and others decided to start the series. My personal decision was to start the vaccine series in hopes they would drop the mandate and I could test weekly. My thought was I worked so hard to become a nurse, I love helping patients, and I needed to be able to provide for my family. So, I got the first dose with tears in my eyes and a heaviness in my heart against my will and religious beliefs like many of my coworkers. Once I

received my first dose, I started hearing from the employees who did submit a religious exemption that they were being approved. I was so mad at myself and felt so conflicted given I did not submit one considering my flu vaccination status and that I was told I wouldn't stand a chance. However, that was untrue.

The religious exemptions were in fact getting approved. But since I already received the first covid vaccine I no longer had a ground to stand on. The nurses' union never sent a follow up on how the September meeting went and at this point those who were planning on leaving were giving their resignations and the rest of us started the vaccine series. By September the 4th I was "fully vaccinated" and I vowed that I would never just comply again. That going forward I would submit my religious exemption and not receive any more covid vaccines against my will as long as I live especially given how those who are vaccinated can still contract and spread the virus. The very fact that natural immunity and antibody testing is not even considered is mind boggling.

As a nurse prior to starting any position it is mandatory to have antibody testing to make sure immunity to diseases like Hepatitis, measles, mumps, rubella are all up to date. Why not do the same with covid antibody testing before mandating a vaccine?

Fast forward to today. I am currently facing yet another mandate. The healthcare facility has sent out another mandate stating that having the booster 3rd shot is considered fully vaccinated. And that anyone who has received the 2-part series is mandated without the option to submit a religious or medical exemption. I cried. I've contemplated resigning but again this is my livelihood. Why can't I have a choice? When is it going to end? When do healthcare workers get a say when it comes to making medical choices for themselves. By February 28th I am to receive the booster shot or resign. How many more times will I have to be forced to be injected with something I do not wish to have in my body or lose my job that provides for my family? In 6 months from now will I be forced yet again? Healthcare workers need someone to fight for us. We need people with good morals to stand up and say enough is enough. Let us have our choice!

Healthcare Testimonies

The Freedom to Choose

- By Maegen

My name is Maegen and I have been proudly serving my community as a nurse for over 14 years. I am writing to you today because I would like to voice my concerns regarding medical mandates. When the pandemic first arrived at the doorstep of my hospital, I was working per diem in the Same Day surgery unit. The numbers rapidly began to climb, and I got word that the ICU was being strained to the breaking point. With over 10 years of ER/critical care experience, I knew my skills could be utilized in a more impactful way. I was not asked, I was not encouraged, I was not instructed to, I volunteered to go where so many were afraid to enter. Much like the rest of the country, I knew very little about COVID when I entered the chaotic scenes of critical care and yet, I went into the frightening unknown without hesitation. I walked into rooms with rows upon rows of people on breathing machines in medically induced comas and monitors sounding alarms informing me that something was wrong. I walked into rooms where physicians spoke to me through glass windows, afraid to breathe the same air as their patients. It was I, the nurse, who stood bedside providing direct care to the severely ill. Nurses like me fought like hell to save as many people as we could. We held their hands and prayed with them, cried as we watched their hearts give out and heard their families scream with anguish through a phone. I can still see every one of their faces. I can still hear sounds that I will never forget, and if I could go back and do it over again, I would. God blessed me with gifts that He never intended to be kept to myself.

In the two years since I fought to save those dying of COVID, I have had to fight equally as hard for myself. Medical mandates threaten my livelihood and the livelihood of my family every day. My facility and our state never gave a second thought when they accepted my services with limited PPE, staffing shortages, and at that time, no testing to determine a person's COVID status. Despite already having recovered from COVID, I am expected to show weekly proof that I am not a threat to society, even though the data is showing that those who are vaccinated are not any less a threat than I. Every year since COVID, I have had to wonder if I will be forced to choose between making a personal medical decision that could affect me for the rest of my life, or my love of serving my community as a nurse. It is a choice that I do not take lightly, but one I maintain is my sovereign right to make for myself without manipulation, coercion, or ultimatums.

Just last week, a patient's procedure was canceled because it could not be determined if he was of sound mind to understand the risks/benefits of the surgery he was about to receive, therefore unable to give true informed consent. How is it then that our government is asking me to consent to receiving a vaccine where the vaccine insert is at this moment completely blank, where the long-term safety studies have yet to be done, and where the risks and benefits have not fully been understood or explained? Furthermore, I as the recipient, must accept full financial responsibility if I am negatively impacted by the vaccine because the manufacturers are entirely exempt from liability. Why was it acceptable for me to provide care to my patients prior to the vaccine, but now it is assumed I am sick until proven healthy? Where do we draw the line and when do the leaders of this state stand up for the bodily autonomy of every individual to make their own health choices?

I understand that you are entrusted with making a very difficult decision that will impact the people of New Jersey, and that you must consider many different points of view. My hope is that you will always remember the principles that our country was founded on and the constitutional rights that protect every American to their individual freedoms. I hope you will side with the freedom to choose, the right to bodily autonomy, and the right to religious freedoms. Our bodies are sacred and ours alone to decide what happens to it. I request that you, our elected leaders, protect the medical and religious freedoms of our state to your greatest and highest capacity. Now is not the time to further restrict and limit people because our country is determined to make decisions rooted in fear. Now is the time to fight harder for our wonderful state, to live free of hate, to live free to choose, to live free of the fear of being labeled and segregated against based on our health status. Thank you.

Healthcare Testimonies

Prepared to do the Unthinkable

- By Christy Migliorisi

My name is Christy Migliorisi and I am a registered nurse at Jersey Shore University Medical Center. I have worked for Hackensack Meridian Health (formerly Meridian Health) since 2017. I have always been very passionate about my career as a nurse. I love taking care of people within my own community.

When the COVID-19 pandemic started back in 2020, we were all scared of the unknown of this virus. This virus was specifically scary for me due to my medical history. I was diagnosed with leukemia at the age of 18 years old. I have spent my entire adult life on medications fighting to control my disease. Despite my illness and side effects from my medication, I worked through this pandemic caring for my patients. When the COVID-19 vaccination came out, I was encouraged by my physician to be vaccinated as he felt it was the "best way to protect myself". I was very hesitant about getting the vaccine. I waited several months as I did not feel comfortable with having such a newly developed vaccine in my body.

Unfortunately, my employer made this vaccine a requirement which swayed my beliefs and feelings. I am a mother of two young children and I need my income to help provide for my family. I felt forced into receiving this vaccine to keep my job. I thought that if I had the vaccine, I would be left alone and be able to continue on with my career as a nurse.

This past summer, the Leukemia and Lymphoma society had sent out information to me to join a study for patients with leukemia who had received the vaccine. After reading through the information, I realized that this vaccine was not even safely tested on people with leukemia. The vaccine's efficacy was in question. I immediately felt sick and betrayed. How can the government give a vaccine to a population of people without thoroughly testing it on that specific population? We are not even sure what, if any, the long-term effects on a healthy individual are from this vaccine. I was now scared of what may happen to me.

I had been hearing for months that a booster dose was being studied and released. When I heard this, I started having severe anxiety. I did not want to end up in the same place as last year-get the shot or lose your job and here I am. I wish I was here today to share my story in person so you could hear my voice and see my face. I am a mother, a wife, a daughter and a nurse. I am a person, just like you. Unfortunately, I am meeting with my union president today to advocate for nurses who do not wish to receive this booster.

No one should have to be forced to put anything inside their bodies. No one should ever face termination for not "complying" with a vaccine that was not thoroughly tested, especially on someone like me who has leukemia. How

would you feel if I was your child, wife, sister or daughter who is now struggling to accept that the only career and profession I have ever known is about to be taken away from me over a booster dose of a vaccine??

The stress and anxiety that I am currently under is also not good for my health and well-being. We all deserve to have autonomy over our own bodies. We all should have the right to choose what we feel is best for ourselves. This is not a "one size fits all" situation.

I urge all of you to please overturn Governor Murphy's Executive Order No. 283. We are already in the middle of a huge nursing shortage and crisis. This mandate will only add to that shortage as many of us are fully prepared to do the unthinkable and walk away from our jobs. Thank you for your time

Healthcare Testimonies

FREE & PROTECTED

- By Teresa S.

For those who choose to get behind this baseless Covid vaccine mandate, I, as a FREE & PROTECTED citizen of the state of New Jersey, want to express my concern for what appears to be a tyrannical Governor exerting his power over his constituents in a most destructive manner! The HEALTHCARE PROFESSION is one of the MOST vaccinated with boosters professions in the NATION. That's a fact! In spite of this fact, the workers are spreading Covid and they themselves are dropping like flies from Covid. So much so that additional costly resources are necessary to keep hospitals up and running! Elective surgeries have been cancelled and delayed due to staffing shortages! The WRITING is on the wall! Statistically the rationale for the mandate is no longer valid! Why are we allowing this to threaten our personal decision-making process? Why are we letting this baseless mindset destroy relationships throughout the country UNNECESSARILY? Nurses & other healthcare workers have been struggling for 2 years to muddle through this nightmare! Please, I'm imploring you, our leaders to get behind our sincerely VALID CONCERNS and come to our defense as we continue to remain motivated and driven to stay in a "profession" that isn't showing us a whole lot of respect these days! Thanks in advance for your time with this very disturbing, concerning matter!

Healthcare Testimonies

Testimony of a Nursing Student

- By Kat Vanderpoel

My name is Kat Vanderpoel. As an essential worker I was exposed and contracted Covid. I was able to treat my illness with alternative, off-label methods and had a very quick recovery. I am a nursing student. The Covid and Flu vaccines are a requirement and my institution does not recognize immunity. You are however, allowed to get your titers done and prove immunity for all other vaccines required. The majority of my class did not want to get these vaccines and felt they had no choice. I was fortunate to have been granted an exemption but I fear that my right to do so will be taken from me at any time. NJ is in dire need for more healthcare workers and these mandates are deterring people from applying to the field. We have no idea what the long-term effects are going to be. Suppose the vaccinated begin developing cancers and disorders. There are already studies out there showing a rapid rate of new Cancer diagnosis. Mandating healthcare workers to get these vaccines could potentially cause the healthcare system to collapse.

My Voice Deserves to be Heard

- By Laurie Phillips

As I have observed these mandates going into place over the last 2 years now, it has frustrated and disillusioned me that we, the hard working and tax paying citizens of NJ, have absolutely no way of making our concerns heard and having them addressed by the very people we elect and pay taxes to. The only way people are having their objections heard is by hiring lawyers and taking their case to court, and not everyone has the time or money to do that. Since when did this country become a place where only the rich and powerful had a voice?

My parents left a war-torn Middle East over 30 years ago to flee that very type of corruption of power and lack of representation. You will never meet anyone more patriotic and "America-loving" than my dad. He instilled that passion and love for America in me, but that is slowly starting to fade into anger and disillusionment over the fact that our leaders - elected by us, supposedly to represent US! - can just hand down these edicts without any explanation, any data or statistics or science to back them up, and we are all just supposed to comply without having any way of asking questions and having them answered. Unless of course we have enough money to hire a lawyer.

I have worked part time as a pharmacist in one of NJ's hardest hit hospitals all throughout this pandemic, rearranging my work schedule due to lack of childcare and never once taking leave of absence out of fear like some of my coworkers did. I saw the refrigerated morgue trucks in our parking lot. I heard the code blues and helped refill the endless code carts. I helped mix the medications that kept patients paralyzed and sedated on ventilators, and the medications that helped people fight COVID. I drew up and prepared vaccine doses for our vaccine clinics. I came home sobbing and traumatized after seeing the horrors of Covid-19 and seeing people die alone without family by their side.

I also felt the horror of not feeling protected by the very hospital I had dedicated the last 13 years of my life to. We were told not to wear masks until well in to the first surge or we could be fired. My concerns about infection control in the pharmacy were met with eye rolls and patronizing dismissal. The times I called out when I felt sick and was worried that I could have Covid were met with anger and intimidation...they would have rather me come to work possibly sick with Covid than have me call out and keep my coworkers safe. Marshall's and TJMaxx were taking temperatures prior to entry way before my hospital started to. And then, to top it all off, our jobs were threatened if we didn't get a yet-to-be-approved vaccine with zero long term safety data.

To say I felt betrayed and demoralized is an understatement. And to have nowhere to turn to have my concerns and objections be heard? Even more demoralizing. And to have it happen yet again with this booster mandate, AND to hear that our legislators are WASTING their time and our taxpayer dollars on setting up a memorial for healthcare workers?? INFURIATING.

What we healthcare workers want is NOT a memorial. We want for you to HEAR us. Put an IMMEDIATE end to Murphy's unchecked reign, restore the power of the legislative process that helps keep him in check and helps represent the PEOPLE. STAND UP to him and to any other powers that be (like hospital admin?) that are helping make these blanket one-size-fits-all mandates. I am a healthcare professional ... I am not anti-science. I am not crazy. I am not selfish or reckless, and sure as hell don't appreciate being compared to a drunk driver by our power-drunk Governor. As a healthcare professional (not a rich ex-Wall Street executive/politician), I KNOW that a booster is not medically indicated or appropriate for my body at this time, and I WILL leave my job rather than comply with something that is medical nonsense. I will leave my department that is already short the equivalent of 12 full time positions even more short staffed because of Murphy's stupidity. I don't want to, but I have no choice because there is nowhere to turn, no one is hearing our voices.

And I am not alone In my department alone, there are 4 other pharmacists who feel the way I do, as well as 2 technicians, and probably many more who are too afraid to speak out. Outside my hospital I personally know of at least 5 other pharmacy colleagues of mine who are opposed to all of this. The media tries to paint us like we are some fringe minorities, but we are not.

My voice deserves to be heard; my questions deserve to be answered. I just hope and pray that you can help stop this madness before Murphy's new mandate causes me to lose the career, I worked so hard for and strips me of my ability to serve the citizens of NJ as a pharmacist during a pandemic.

Testimony of a Pharmaceutical Representative

- By Anonymous

I am a vendor/pharmaceutical rep in New Jersey. The stress of a vaccine mandate began for me in 2019 when NJ passed a law that all HCPs had to receive the flu vaccine. I had never had a flu vaccine and never wanted one especially after learning about Guillain Barre Syndrome when I was in college. I applied for religious exemption at one of our large hospital systems. I was grateful that it was accepted. I joined thousands at the State House in December 2019 and January 2020 to peacefully protest BILL S2173 that was going to eliminate RE in NJ. Thank God we were able to successfully reach enough legislators to "kill the bill" by a very slim margin which caused them to table the bill due to not having enough "yes" votes.

Who knew that only a short, barely two months later, Covid would enter into all of our lives? When the Covid shots were mandated, the local hospital systems only allowed their employees to apply for RE or ME. Vendors and reps like myself were told that we could not apply. It was comply or lose access and not be able to do our jobs. What a gut wrenching, mental and emotional stress this has caused me for far too long now. I am to this day absolutely flabbergasted that a person can be forced to inject themselves with something they are vehemently against to the core of their beings in order to keep a job, a 20+ year career that supports their family. Frankly it's not too different from a superior forcing or threatening an employee to comply with anything, do this invasive personal thing or you'll lose your job. They argue that it's for the greater good and to protect ourselves and others.

Well, we've all learned that complying with this injection is not without serious risks, including the possibility of death AND it does NOT prevent a person from becoming infected and/or still spreading it!!!! Now we are right back at square one with the hospital systems mandating the booster, despite the risk, despite the lack of efficacy and despite the vast number of us who have NATURAL IMMUNITY. It is a horrible feeling to feel helpless and at the mercy of an employer or system. I feel the vendors/reps have been the forgotten group in this nightmare. God help us all and I pray that the truth and light soon overcome the lies and darkness asap.

