

Die or Get Your Flu Shot - Your Choice

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Most of the folks in our office got flu shots at work last week. To any of you who are reluctant to get the shot or any of you who know people reluctant to get the shot, allow me to add my two cents worth.

First, the flu shot works. Not perfectly, but pretty well. Sometimes different strains of virus evolve or mutate and the vaccine misses those.

Second, the flu shot does not cause the flu. It is not possible because they use dead viruses in the vaccine. If someone says, "I got the shot and then I came down with the flu so I know that the shot causes the flu," hit them. Hit them really hard in the head and tell them that they are stupid beyond words and only physical abuse has any hope of getting to them. You could say, "You are demonstrating the logical fallacy called 'Post hoc ergo propter hoc' (Latin for "after this, therefore because of this"), a logical fallacy that states "since event Y followed event X, event Y must have been caused by event X." But really, they are too stupid for an argument supported by the words of ancient philosophers.

Third, no one has natural immunity to the flu. Just because you "never get the flu" doesn't mean you won't this year. And if you do get the flu, you create risk of giving it to the folks around you, even those who got vaccinated. It is arrogant and selfish to play that game of Russian roulette.

Fourth, while it is true that some versions of the flu shot have formaldehyde, the amount is minuscule. Your body already contains a million times more formaldehyde than you will get from the flu shot.

Fifth, allow me to add this personal note: 18 months ago the flu shot missed the mark for me and I got the flu anyway. It happens. As noted above, the vaccine is not perfect. Sometimes the flu shot misses a strain of the flu that becomes prevalent. That flu made me miserable in all the usual ways. It also did something else. The flu virus traveled to my heart and quietly attacked the most important muscle in my body. When it was discovered months later, I had congestive heart failure, atrial fibrillation (a crazy heartbeat), and a heart function of 20%. A little lower than that and you get to go on the heart transplant list—yippee!

The doctors told me that I might recover, I might stay the same, or I might die. At least one doctor was pretty adamant that the third option was most likely. Just to prove him wrong, I recovered. I recovered fully. My heart is functioning normally again, but the flu nearly killed me. I know that few people who get the flu face a serious risk of dying, but why take that chance. GET YOUR FLU SHOT! It usually works, it doesn't do any harm, and it beats the hell out of dying.