

Dear all,

You may have recently received in your letterbox a flyer produced by Voices for Freedom claiming to be in possession of the 'truth' about the COVID-19 vaccine. There are many 'facts' listed on the flyer and on the website which are not facts and which are blatantly misleading and need to be addressed.

Firstly, a bit of background. According to their website, The Voices for Freedom 'organisation' was founded by three 'Kiwi mums' with self-proclaimed expertise in law, education, online business and marketing, and community development. Glaringly absent from this list is anything to do with medicine, infectious diseases, public health, pharmacology, or in fact, any science related field. Most of the references cited on the website are not from the scientific literature but from popular press. Behind the link titled 'Doctors Speaking Out' is an opinion piece by precisely one doctor, a psychiatrist. The 'Contact Us' link is conveniently inactive although the 'Donate' link seems to work just fine.

I'd like to now address the '8 important covid vaccine facts you probably haven't heard' as listed on the flyer.

#8: Vaccine companies are exempt from ALL liability.

While this claim is technically true it is misleading. New Zealand is not the only country to have granted such indemnity and has done so only because of the unprecedented nature of the pandemic. It is not uncommon for pharmaceutical companies to seek indemnity when a vaccine or drug is fast-tracked but this does NOT MEAN that no one is accountable; the New Zealand government has assumed liability for adverse vaccine outcomes rather than the assigning responsibility to the manufacturer.

#7: All COVID-19 vaccines are currently experimental. Some trials won't end until 2023.

This statement is also technically true but spun in such a way as to mislead. At what point does a therapy stop being 'experimental'? Many widely used drugs for an array of conditions are technically also 'experimental'; that is, they are still being studied in clinical trials. This is NOTHING NEW. Given the extremely high incidence of COVID in communities across the world, the data for the safety and efficacy of the COVID vaccines is actually greater than for many other drugs currently in use.

#6: The vaccine has not been shown to stop you catching SARS-CoV-2 or passing it on to others.

While no one can guarantee that any vaccinated individual cannot become infected, it is safe to conclude, based on nearly every well-done study to date, that the risk of infection, as well as the severity of infection, is significantly decreased. This is not up for debate. Most experts (virologists, public health doctors, etc.) believe that the vaccines decrease transmissibility of the virus though this is extremely difficult to prove because of the many factors involved in infectivity. But there is good biological plausibility however to believe that the less circulating virus there is in the body, the less infectious that individual is.

Here's a very readable but accurate article on the possible effects of the vaccine on viral transmissibility:

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-00450-z>

#5: The only reason given to take the vaccine is that it might reduce symptoms.

To be accurate this claim should be re-phrased 'is highly likely to reduce symptoms.' These symptoms are often not 'the sniffles' but in fact can be quite severe, debilitating, and long-lasting. The 'symptom' list by the way also includes death.

#4: Animals in prior coronavirus vaccine trials became very sick when exposed to the wild virus.

NO COVID vaccine in current use contains 'wild virus' so this 'fact' is blatantly false and intended only to fear-monger.

#3: It is unknown if the vaccine will cause cancer, sterility, or mutate cells.

Again, while technically true, this claim is wildly inaccurate. This same claim could be made for any new drug or therapy entering the market since such effects can take decades to become evident. There is no data to suggest the mRNA vaccine currently in use in New Zealand can cause ANY of the above effects and there is little to no biological plausibility to think that it could. mRNA does not enter the nucleus of the cell, serves only as a template for protein production in the cytoplasm, and is therefore VERY unlikely to cause changes to DNA.

#2 Medsafe's Pfizer report highlights concerns about genotoxicity and serious autoimmunity.

There is no reference given for this claim. The role of Medsafe is to highlight all safety concerns, however rare. In my reading of the Medsafe Data Sheet for the Pfizer vaccine I can find nothing to support the above claim.

<https://www.medsafe.govt.nz/profs/Datasheet/c/comirnatyinj.pdf>

#1 Deaths and cases of serious injury are being reported around the world at an alarming rate.

It is unclear what constitutes an 'alarming' rate. The rate of serious and potentially fatal side effects from the vaccine is DWARFED by the rates of mortality and serious morbidity worldwide. This comment probably refers to the very rare complication of cerebral thrombosis which has garnered much attention in the popular press; however this complication has been seen mostly in vaccines employing an adenovirus to introduce the antigen protein and NOT in mRNA vaccines. People in New Zealand die every year from

anaphylactic reactions to common antibiotics. However compared to the lives saved from antibiotic use, the risk would be deemed acceptable by most reasonable people.

Finally, the flyer urges the reader to 'discover the hard vaccine facts before it's too late.' As a frontline physician with thirty years of experience I could not find one fact that could satisfy any reasonable scientific definition of 'hard.' On offer instead were half-truths, truths conveniently spun to misinform, or outright falsehoods. If you'd like to read more scientifically accurate information before deciding to be vaccinated here's a good resource:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/keythingstoknow.html>

Respectfully submitted,

Art Nahill, MD, FRACP  
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