

Vaccine anyone?

by SHERALYN ROMAN

We're being told plans for the vaccine roll out are well underway for communities across Ontario. We're also being told of temporary delays in vaccine distribution due to renovations currently underway at Pfizer's Germany-based manufacturing facility. Among these news reports are others that provide conflicting information as to who is (or should be) next in line to receive the vaccination after health care workers and residents of long-term care facilities.

Murkier still are the waters that must be navigated when determining why certain groups should receive priority over others AND what to do about the vaccine deniers ? those who say they won't be getting ?jabbed? whether for religious, philosophical or conspiracy theory-related reasons. When your turn comes, will you be lining up for the vaccine?

I think we all understand and can agree on frontline health care workers being ?front of the line.? They face risk every single day, willingly putting their health and safety at risk to help protect ours. Residents of long-term care homes must also be taken care of. They are susceptible, sitting ducks whom we have done an abominable job of protecting. Currently published vaccine protocols suggest that other congregate care/residential settings are next, followed by remote Indigenous populations. So far so good, but what of the doctor on maternity leave vaccinated before their co-workers who are actually ON the job? What about the psychiatrist, only seeing patients virtually, receiving their first dose before PSWs working in long term care facilities? I'm reading about ?lotteries? and dosages ?going to waste? if they are not used up, meaning some folks are receiving the vaccine who shouldn't be. I'm just saying if we've called in the top military minds to help execute a safe, fair and efficient vaccine distribution campaign, it doesn't bode well for our success on the battlefield should that ever become necessary.

The decision of how to vaccinate an entire population is no doubt a legal, ethical and moral minefield. I don't envy those tasked with its execution. But that is presumably why we've called in the experts ? both military and health professionals ? to make these difficult decisions for us. Otherwise, I suppose we'd be left with no choice but to use good, old-fashioned common sense. For me, this would mean all frontline workers get the jab; paramedics, police officers, child and youth workers in group home settings, shelter employees and those living in congregate settings and so on. Then, how about the other people we've been calling frontline heroes all along? Truck drivers, grocery store workers, teachers, the people picking, packing and delivering all that stuff you've been ordering on Amazon? In fact, if we're claiming workplace outbreaks as a source of community spread, why aren't we starting there?

Questions have been raised just in the last few days about how to manage vaccinations for those who are medically compromised and/or the people who care for them. Those concerns range from, ?Is it safe for someone suffering from ?X' to receive the vaccine? through to ?If I am the primary caregiver for someone with ?X' should I be front of the line so as not to spread COVID to them?? Do we further delineate this list based on the severity of ?X'? Are some diseases or conditions considered more deserving than others? Should those who have chronic medical conditions be near the front of the line? Yup, I certainly think so, but I'm also biased. I love someone with a chronic, life-altering medical condition. Perhaps this has been part of the problem with the rollout plans. In attempting to define every scenario, no scenarios are clearly defined.

On the vaccine deniers, I fear there is little to say. It seems obvious to most of us that the vaccine is not a secret plot by Bill Gates to install a microchip into every human on earth. It seems obvious to most that vaccinations, in and of themselves, don't cause disease. But tell that to someone who received a travel vaccination and within days, mysteriously fell ill with a severe, life-lasting medical condition. Tell that to the mother of a girl who received the Gardasil vaccine and has suffered from a crippling disability ever since, or to the person with life-threatening allergies who has read about the 21 severe anaphylactic responses to the vaccine and wonders if they might be next. I'm not a vaccine denier, but I do have some concerns. I'm going to get the vaccine, but I am worried about it. I worry too - what do we do with those frontline workers who refuse to be vaccinated but work in health care or congregate living settings? Will this become a mandatory condition of employment? There are so many questions. It's a complicated web we weave when we attempt to define COVID vaccination schedules for all, all while trying to do so with the ?greater good? in mind. As for the idea of COVID passports, I don't think so. The words ?civil liberties? come to mind. All of these musings beg the question, what

will you do when your turn comes?