

Science and mandates



I congratulate Lisa Wills on coming out from behind the placards to argue her case (“What has happened to us?” (October 1). However, the misuse of science and the “didn’t happen to me and my friends, so it won’t hurt you” attitude from a teacher leaves me in despair.

Some people did get very ill, some died, and some survived. Some suffer from long Covid. And yes, some had symptoms so mild that they were not aware they had been infected. Denying these experiences by relying on a small number of selected cases rather than the evidence of the New Zealand scientific community is far from a reasoned expression of science. Nor is it a reasoned argument for individual freedom and rights.

I am glad unvaccinated teachers were excluded from the profession. I believe it helped keep my five-year-old grandson safe at school, and by protecting him, it helped keep my wife, his grandmother who has multiple sclerosis, safe and this helped protect his 93-year-old and 83-year-old grandmothers from infection.

My point is not that their rights are greater than Lisa Wills’, but that from their point of view, her exclusion from teaching was a decision that we as their relatives would see was just as correct and reasonable as hers.

The long-term impact of many urgent interventions, be they medical, environmental or personal, is rarely fully known, but we must collectively make the best decisions we can on the available evidence. Community and social cohesion rely on striking a balance between protecting the rights of the individual and those of the population. We have to respond to immediate danger without the time to assess longer-term, unknown outcomes.

When fire threatens, there is little point in letting it burn while we assess the environmental impact on the house of the materials used to manufacture the hoses.

Name and address withheld

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Wills asks, “What has happened to us?” My answer is, “Fundamentally, nothing.”

Our society is functioning as we intend it to function. What has happened is that the pandemic has thrown into sharp focus our answers, collectively and individually, to another question, and one at the heart of our society. That question is, “Does society have the right to protect its vulnerable members?”

Most people would answer “Yes”, and so we have a law that takes away an individual’s right to smoke in vehicles carrying children. And so we had a mandate that took away Wills’ right to work with the public while unvaccinated.

She says she was at the Parliament protest “to defend our human rights”, but does not explain what she understands those rights to be. In fact, nothing in her article suggests she has any awareness of the essential need of society to balance individual rights against the rights of its vulnerable members, nor that that necessarily means she and we can be prevented from doing some things we’d like to do.

Since she is a teacher, with the now-restored right to influence young minds, I find that disturbing.

John Miller Crawford (Grey Lynn, Auckland)

Like Lisa Wills, I also suffer from autoimmune disorder. After three Pfizer jabs, I’m still alive and reasonably okay. Even though I normally prefer to stay home, work from home and could easily avoid contracting Covid-19 (I have not got it yet), I preferred to get the jabs not only for me, but also mostly for everyone around.

Teachers who are ready to risk the health and life of their pupils just to prove a point and/or express their freedom in the time of emergency should really rethink their choice of profession. The same applies to medical professionals who ignore the science and consensus of the majority of their colleagues and are prepared to endanger the health of their patients just to express or prove their conviction.

It looks like what has happened to us is that we have learnt the lesson of the “Unfortunate Experiment” at National Women’s Hospital and are ready to censure medical professionals convinced they know better than the majority before they inflict real harm.

Piotr Smolira (West Harbour, Auckland)

Wills’ article on the discrimination of mandates contained few medical facts on the pandemic. It needs this context.

These are the facts that matter: at the height of the effects of the most malicious Delta strain, it was reported by health departments in as far apart places as New York, Italy, Germany and the UK that the vast majority of deaths, new infections and hospitalisations were of the unvaccinated.

The ratio of deaths per head of population at the peak in New Zealand, where close to 97% of the population eventually were vaccinated, was 1 in 2561, whereas in the US, where vaccination rates at the time ranged from 65% to 40%, the ratio was 1 in 365.

At the time of the release of this data, anti-vaccination people I communicated with were in denial of these facts, which was the reason the government implemented mandates. Without them, it foresaw a complete over-running of the health system as a result of an unreasonable fear of the vaccine's harm.

Many New Zealanders sympathised with those lamenting a lack of choice, and public acceptance of mandates quickly wilted after relative safety had been reached and the war was over. As Wills says, "the scars remain" as the perhaps unfairly distributed cost of survival.

Keith Burgess (Sumner, Christchurch)

Some of these comments would make more sense if the "vaccine" really were a vaccine, and if it actually prevented people from contracting and transmitting the disease.

Piotr Smolira is apparently referring to the "pandemic of the unvaccinated" – a slogan popularized by Joe Biden in late 2021, when the "Delta variant" of Covid-19 was at its height. All the statistics I have seen have indicated that any protection provided by the Covid injections is short-lived, and that the shots ultimately degrade the immune system - making the individual *more*, not less, susceptible to disease.

Keith Burgess appears to acknowledge that the "vaccine" causes harm, but dismisses any fear of it as "unreasonable".