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Improvements, yet I sent a COVID patient last night to the emergency room

The COVID headlines are definitely good: COVID deaths throughout the world [fell by 20%](#) compared to the previous week; U.S. vaccine [production and supply increase](#) after snowstorm caused delays. Yet at the patient level, I don't yet see the impact. Last nite, the daughter of one of my patients texted me saying that her mom was having shortness of breath and had just been diagnosed with COVID. I called the patient back just before I went to sleep; I could hear her difficulty breathing. I immediately suggested that she consider going to the emergency room. Still not clear on the outcome. Most of my patients are eligible for vaccine now but can't access the system. Yet a disturbing percentage of my eligible patients yesterday did not want the vaccine. One of them heard me out and said she would think about it. I used approaches as summarized in a just published [NEJM article](#) which I recommend to all as we will get to a point when there will be increased supplies of vaccine and our challenge will be to gently nudge as many as possible to getting the vaccine rather than [other approaches](#) including job termination as discussed in a previous COVID note. Unfortunately, political party affiliation [impacts vaccine acceptance](#) with 41% of Republicans indicate that they will today refuse the vaccine in contrast to only 6% of Democrats; many [basketball players](#) have expressed similar hesitancy.

The pandemic has impacted the entire health care system. Pharmacies are increasingly offering primary care services and will [be vaccinating millions of people](#). This will result in even greater challenges for primary care health professionals [many of whom have left their practices](#) during the pandemic.

Of course, we continue to learn a great deal about COVID. Can we achieve [herd immunity](#) without [vaccinating children](#) (which will not happen for months). A significant number of my patients are still dealing with the [long term effects of COVID infection](#); the health system where I work has just opened up a clinic specifically for patients who months out still have symptoms. As I have stated before, quoting former CDC director Tom Frieden, just like the flu we will have the COVID vaccine and we will still have COVID. We cant take the perspective of some [popular conservative commentators](#) that the science tells us we can now return to normal, but what is the role, if any, of ["COVID Passports"](#)

Last week we had upwards of 60 people from throughout the U.S. attend the AND meeting on vaccine acceptance. We have a long way to go on vaccine acceptance; here at AND we plan to continue this work and appreciate any input. I was struck by the heartfelt comments and passion about acceptance or hesitancy. Two health professionals spoke movingly of their mothers who till now refused the vaccine. But they aren't giving up!