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COVID Notes; Many Vaccinated Hardly Sick COVID patients; Endemic Vs Pandemic?

The COVID positive patients keep rolling in. Had several new patients on Friday. Some of my small number of vaccine resistant patients are [ready for the job](#). Hospitalizations at my hospital are going down but still a large number – well over 200 but down from almost 300 just a week ago. Still elective procedures are mostly on hold. Urgent procedures can be done expeditiously. According to the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#): “COVID-19 cases among children have spiked dramatically across the United States during the Omicron variant surge. Child cases continued to rise the past week, now over 1.1 million cases were reported, nearly five times the rate of the peak of last winters’ surge.” Echoing what I have found for most of my long COVID patients: [One year](#) after 246 COVID-19 survivors were treated in 1 of 11 intensive care units (ICUs) in the Netherlands, nearly 75% reported lingering physical symptoms, more than 26% said they had mental symptoms, and upwards of 16% still had cognitive symptoms. COVID impact on health workers both in [the U.S.](#) and [abroad , especially low income countries, is](#) staggering. One newspaper account was [spot on](#): we are living in a split-screen pandemic with many people resuming “normal” lives while hospitals are still overloaded. Starting next week most of my patient care is face to face.

What does the future hold in store for us at a national level as we think about continuing to handle this and future pandemics. As reported by [the Post](#), Government Accounting Office Investigators “[found persistent deficiencies](#)” in how the agency has led the response to the [coronavirus](#) pandemic and past public health emergencies dating to 2007, the Government Accountability Office [concluded](#), citing continued problems coordinating among public health agencies, collecting infectious-disease surveillance data and securing appropriate testing and medical supplies, among areas it said are unresolved.

While the conclusions are sobering, I am at least heartened by the fact that we are at least having this conversation out in the open. The NYT had an [excellent article](#) reviewing Biden’s first year echoing my belief that we can do much better. In 2020, the Senate released [a report](#). The Senate (Murray, a D, and Burr, an R in the lead) is [currently working](#) on new legislation. Even the head of the CDC [realizes](#) the need for significant reform.

Schools are [challenged](#): “In Massachusetts, Republican Gov. Charlie Baker’s administration wants schools to abandon a “test and stay” program the state helped pioneer last summer [in favor of a new plan](#) to scrap contact tracing and concentrate on finding symptomatic people with help from rapid tests taken at home instead of school. Vermont is taking a similar approach with a “[test at home](#)” effort that scales back the use of sweeping, laboratory-based virus tests.”

For the immediate term, are we facing an endemic vs pandemic situation. Cases are high but are not a reliable number of the seriousness of the situation. Yet deaths and hospitalizations are still high in many states. These are the variables that should be considered when deciding whether we should live life as in a pandemic or consider it endemic. If it is endemic, we need: testing capacity (not there yet); availability of medication (which we largely don’t have); and a state and national level commitment to public health infrastructure (which we don’t have at all). Yet [not just R voters](#) are ready to move on.

From a global perspective, the [discussion](#) currently going on in Congress to expand vaccine access world wide is a step in the right direction. We clearly have a long way to go. Ask Nurses and Doctors continues to focus on this topic as it gears up for the 2022 elections. See the document “AND 2022 Objectives” for our current plans; feedback engagement are welcome.

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