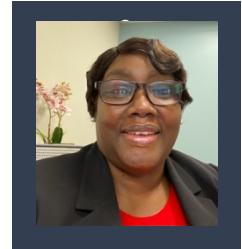




Vaccine Vitals - A Perspective Into the COVID Vaccination Rollout

Interview by Emma Dzifa Toussaint, FNP-C



Matilda Adams, Interviewee

This interview was conducted on December 13, 2020, prior to the release of the Moderna and Pfizer Covid vaccines. It features Ms. Matilda Adams, MPH, BSN, RN, NE-BC, Director & Site Administrator for a Cancer Center in South Jersey. Ms. Adams is not only a Nurse Leader at her institution, she is also a leader in NAGNF serving as the Northeast chapter president, with credentials including a Masters in Public Health. She wears many hats, serving as a Reverend, and hosting a podcast Spirit, Soul & Body, every Saturday Morning at 11:30am. She spent some time discussing different vaccine related topics. Our conversation was relevant and insightful, and her time and perspective is much appreciated.

What are your thoughts on the vaccine?

The vaccine is needed, and all the controversy and confusion around it is due to misinformation. The mRNA, (messenger rna) has been in trial for 2 decades, and is not as rushed as many people think. When this crisis occurred, the world stopped, which led to world leaders working together to remove the barriers to research and development, hence the quick turnaround. The Covid-19 genome was isolated by the Chinese and sent around the world so scientists could continue their work on vaccines. RNA is unstable outside its shell, so the genetic material is destroyed and does not enter the DNA or anyone's genetic material for that matter. The work around the vaccine may seem rushed but the prototype was already there. As an African woman who grew up in a third world country, I have seen the benefit of vaccines and how far we have come. There are vaccines for smallpox, BCG for TB, yellow fever, cholera and so many more. They are necessary. Let's see it as progress, not evil. It's a good thing.

The vaccine is currently optional for healthcare workers. Do you think it will be mandated like the flu vaccine, and or do you foresee punitive measures against those who opt-out?

No, I believe it will stay optional, it's still very new and the immune response can be unpredictable. Flu has been around and we know what to expect for the most part. I doubt there will be punitive measures, we would lose staff if we tried that. The most may be for people who refuse the vaccine to continue to mask up as is the case for staff who opt out of the flu vaccine. Covid-19 should be controlled if the majority of people get vaccinated. What happens is when majority of the community has immunity the virus has nowhere to go, that is no host and thereby it weakens. Therefore, it is imperative that people need to get vaccinated.

How is your institution rolling out the vaccine and providing support for those against it?

New Jersey set its own distribution plan, and therefore we are following that plan. We have levels 1A, 1B, 2 and so forth. Currently we are working with level 1A which is - frontline workers (EMS, ICU, ED, Mobile ICU, Covid floor staff), and the rest will follow. We surveyed all 14, 000 employees and 60% said they would take the vaccine. We have also put a plan in place so we are not vaccinating all the staff on one unit at the same time. The reason being we know people may feel slightly ill from the immune response and we cannot function with no staff due to call outs. The vaccine is being given in phases, 3 RNs per unit, so everyone does not get it at the same time.

As you know, Africans and African Americans do not necessarily trust new medical measures due to experiments in the past. Also, there are many theories out there about this vaccine, including population control etc. What would you say to someone who mistrusts and believes the theories?

I grew up in a 3rd world country as I stated before and vaccines saved us from many diseases, including smallpox, measles, polio, TB and chickenpox. These diseases were mitigated in Africa due to vaccines. We should actually be taking it because of how Covid-19 impacts African Americans. Looking at that death rate overall we have suffered the most. I have heard about population control and I beg to differ. Covid-19 cuts through every race and ethnicity, so the vaccine is not trying to wipe away ethnic groups. I have heard the suggestions that the vaccine carries the mark of the beast- so let me address this from a biblical perspective. The devil is known as one who lies, therefore why on earth will he put out in plain view his plan to kill and destroy you and allowing us to know that the vaccine has the mark of the beast. This notion is scripturally flawed. That is not how the anti-Christ will be presented, so that theory is totally debunked.

If someone has had Covid, should they still consider getting the vaccine?

The jury is still out on immunity from disease. We are learning that people can be re-infected within 60-90 days, so we do not know how protected one is. Yes, he or she should get the vaccine.

Would you consider getting it and why?

Absolutely! As a responsible healthcare worker, I am going to take it and lead by example. I work in healthcare, and even though I do not provide direct patient care, I go in and out of the building daily and would not want to put my vulnerable patients at risk.

What pearl would you leave with Ghanaian nurses here and abroad?

I would tell them, it is safe and important to take the vaccine. We owe it to our families, patients and ourselves to get vaccinated. It will cut down on worry about exposure. Do what's right and protect yourself and those around you.

Financial Milestones to Reach by Each Decade of Your Life

Courtesy of DiversyFund

By the time you graduate from high school or college and are starting your adult life, you should have learned some basic financial concepts—opening a bank account, paying bills, having a budget, learning how credit works, understanding how to pay taxes, balancing a checking account, etc. These are the basic financial skills you need just to survive in the real world.

Beyond that, however, what needs to be done in order to achieve real financial freedom and retire exactly how you want to? Below are financial milestones you should reach in each decade of your life to ensure you are setting your future self up for success.

Reach These Milestones by Age 30

You've graduated, you land your first job, and you are ready to take on the world. If you are like most young adults, however, you'll also find that getting your personal finances in order is more complicated than you thought it would be. Here are some of the lessons to master and milestones to work towards before you reach 30.

Create and stick to a budget. If you don't make and follow a budget, you are setting yourself up for financial disaster. Budgeting means putting your money to work for you and gives you the confidence to know that you'll be able to pay your bills on time. Be sure to prioritize saving a little each month for an emergency fund. You should work to save at least 3 to 6 months' worth of expenses as preparation for the unexpected.

Pay down student loans. College graduates report that student loan payments are one of the biggest sources of financial stress in their lives. In fact, Forbes reports that there are more than 44 million borrowers who collectively owe \$1.5 trillion in student loan debt in the U.S. alone! Student loan payments can make it difficult to afford housing and can also prevent you from qualifying for a loan or saving money to buy a house. Paying down your student loans early is one of the best things you can do to set yourself up for long-term financial health.

Get your own health insurance. If you've been covered by your parents' health insurance, it's time to get your own policy. Unless you work for yourself or a small business, this should be part of your employment benefits package.

Improve your financial literacy. Have you found that you still have a lot to learn about credit scores, retirement plans, loans, and investing? Thankfully, there are a lot of great online resources available for beginners and experts in all of these topics.

Start Investing. Invest early and invest often! That should be your mantra. Even if you don't have much money during this decade of your life, starting with small amounts is the key to success. Investing in real estate for \$500, opening up a high yield savings account, and becoming more familiar with the stock market are all things you need to take advantage of while you still have time on your side to grow your money.

Savings Goal: Half of your annual salary. If you are making \$50,000, then having around \$25,000 saved should put you on track.

Reach These Milestones by Age 40

The decade from thirty to forty can bring some pretty major life changes. Getting married and starting a family introduces a whole new set of financial challenges. Here are some of the lessons to master and milestones to work towards before you reach 40.

Buy a house. A home is not only a place to live but also an investment. Try to save more than 20% of the purchase price before buying a home. You'll get a lower interest rate on your mortgage, avoid paying mortgage insurance, and still have money left over for closing costs.

Make retirement savings a priority. You should definitely have retirement accounts open right now. But during this time, you should check back in and make it your priority. Make sure you are putting a large chunk of your income towards your retirement savings and take advantage of any employer match. The money you invest today has the greatest opportunity to earn compound interest and increase your wealth for the rest of your working years.

Get life insurance. Now that you have a family, it's important to add life insurance to your portfolio. Life insurance will help to provide for your funeral expenses as well as lost future earnings in the event of your death.

Build a more diverse investment portfolio. In your thirties, you should definitely have your 401(k), IRA, or other investment accounts opened and working for you. Now it's time to develop an investment portfolio that provides for the future financial needs of your family. For example, you should look into college savings accounts for your children in addition to traditional stocks, bonds, and mutual funds.

Savings Goal: By 40, you should aim to have twice your annual salary saved. If you are making \$90,000, then having around \$180,000 saved should put you on track.

Reach These Milestones by Age 50

Now that you are in your forties, you are reaching your peak earning years. Use this time to make sure you are in the best position possible to enjoy this time. Here are some of the lessons to master and milestones to work towards before you reach 50.

Schedule annual visits with a financial planner. If you have not been meeting with a financial planner on a regular basis, now is the time to start scheduling annual meetings. Your financial planner will help you define your short-term, medium-term, and long-term financial goals and develop a plan to get you there.

Make a will. Now that you have a family and assets, you want to be assured that both are taken care of according to your wishes after your death. If you have minor children, you will want to name their legal guardian and set up a trust to support them.

Add even more alternative investments into your portfolio. By this time, you should have around 4 times your annual income saved for retirement. This is also a good time to up your alternative investments, such as real estate, into your portfolio. DiversyFund provides a platform for alternative investments such as real estate investment trusts (REITs).

Savings Goal: By 50, you should aim to have four times your annual salary saved. If you are making \$120,000, then having around \$480,000 saved should put you on track.

Reach These Milestones by Age 60

As you get closer to retirement, you should start making final preparations for this next phase in your life. Here are some of the lessons to master and milestones to work towards before you reach 60.

Pay off any outstanding debt. In order to make the most of your retirement income, you should go ahead and pay off as much outstanding debt as possible. You don't want to waste your retirement income on debt payments.

Maximize your retirement savings. Make sure you are investing the maximum amount into your retirement account every year. You should make serious gains in your retirement account with the interest that has been compounding for the past 20-30 years.

Reduce the level of risk in your investment portfolio. As you get closer to retirement, you want to move your portfolio away from riskier stocks into investments like income mutual funds, bonds, and real estate. This shift will help protect the wealth you've worked so hard to build over your lifetime.

Savings Goal: By 60, you should aim to have six times your annual salary saved. If you are making \$125,000, then having around \$750,000 saved should put you on track.

By retirement age (67), one should aim to have eight times their annual salary saved. If you are making \$125,000, then having around \$1,000,000 saved should put you on track.

Every individual and situation is different. There are so many factors such as medical costs, debt, life expectancy, and retirement lifestyle that all play into the amount needed during retirement. AARP writes that for a retiree to generate \$40,000/year after stopping work, he or she will need savings of about \$1.18 million to support a 30-year retirement (calculated using average returns of 6 percent and inflation at 2.5 percent).

People who start saving for retirement at age 22 may only need to allocate 10% of their annual salary to retirement. The older you are when you start saving for retirement, the greater the percentage of your salary will need to be devoted to retirement. The timeline may also depend on the age at which you plan to retire. That being said, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to financial planning, but the above are some good milestones to hit to ensure you are on the right track!

(Not) Living in the Past

(Excerpt from Whispers in the Dark, Sept 4, 2016)

By Irene Ahorlu

"Do not let your past steal your present and ruin your future." That's a simple straightforward advice but in reality not so easy to implement. In truth, the past does not hold the keys to the present or unlock the doors to the future. However, it wields such power in our lives because of the imprinted memories it holds. These memories can bring satisfaction or pain if not categorized and utilized appropriately.

The past has the power to shape our thoughts, feelings and actions. It controls how we relate to others. For instance, bad experiences make us cautious and wary of others whilst great experiences make us trusting and full of goodwill towards others. It helps us determine whether to avoid certain people or situations and allows us to embrace others. It also assists us with strategic planning for the future as it relates to finances and personal growth by providing a reference point. Moreover, it acts as a reminder of where we used to be in order to keep us humble and living in gratitude especially if we have made positive strides in our lives.

Evidently, the past has some role to play in our lives as previously described. However, do we allow it to be a major determining factor in how we live our present lives? If for example, a bad relationship with a lover makes us skittish, do we recoil and hide under the bed covered in blankets in the heat of summer?

Do we remain cautious and cynical forever? Or do we take stock and place the experience in the past where it belongs and live life with total abandon with great expectancy? The second option sounds much better and is a no-brainer.

A concept that provides the breeding ground for clinging to the past is unresolved internal conflict. With unresolved internal conflict comes visions of the past, with its floating scenes in vivid imagery coercing you to watch and watch and watch. These visions tap into your inner voyeur, enticing you to more reruns and replays, like the never-ending tunes from a karaoke machine. Yes, scenes of the past gyrate and bob in front of you like the sing-along lyrics dancing in front of the karaoke screen. It takes deep moments of reflection and awareness of the harm unresolved internal conflict brings to rid the mind of these useless visions of the past.

Interestingly, the total elimination of painful, valueless visions of the past, makes the present the gift it was meant to be...to be unwrapped carefully, opened slowly and savored sweetly. By living in the present daily with hopeful expectation, each day begins with unlimited potential. Any day can usher in true undying love, intimacy and friendship. Surely, each day can open doors to forgiveness, reconciliation and rediscovery. Each new day can most certainly lead to visions and dreams fulfilled. It can even lead to a night of dancing heavy cares away and ushering in many nights of dancing. Furthermore, it can release the superhero from the weakling and unleash the creative artiste from the stuffy suit. Living in the present therefore frees us from the weight of a past that binds and releases a future of endless possibilities.

Long-term Effects of COVID-19 Disease

By Irene Ahorlu, CRNA, MSN

COVID-19 has upended our world to say the least. The stress from having moderate to severe disease alone is enormous. Interestingly enough, that is not the end of the story when "recovery" comes. The term "Long-Hauler" is being used for COVID survivors who are having long-term effects from the disease. According to a study by Dr. Natalie Lambert with the Indiana School of Medicine and Survivor Corps (July 25, 2020) there are 98 symptoms identified as "Long-hauler" symptoms.

The following tables represent the symptoms identified with the prevalence.

It is truly concerning that despite recovery from COVID-19 the risk of having lingering symptoms is still present. It will be prudent to practice social distancing, masking and follow good handwashing practices. In addition, vaccination against COVID-19 should be considered if there are no contraindications based on health history. Open-mindedness and getting information from reputable sources is necessary to make an informed decision whether vaccination is right for you.

Reference

Lambert, N. J. & Survivor Corps. COVID-19 "Long Hauler" Symptoms Survey Report. Indiana University School of Medicine; 2020.

Figure 8. Full List of Symptoms Reported by Long Haulers (n=98)

Symptom	# Responses
Fatigue	1,567
Muscle or body aches	1,046
Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing	1,020
Difficulty concentrating or focusing	924
Inability to exercise or be active	916
Headache	902
Difficulty sleeping	782
Anxiety	746
Memory problems	714
Dizziness	656
Persistent chest pain or pressure	609
Cough	577
Joint pain	566
Heart palpitations	509
Diarrhea	506
Sore throat	496
Night sweats	475
Partial or complete loss of sense of smell	460
Tachycardia	448
Fever or chills	441
Hair loss	423
Blurry vision	418
Congested or runny nose	414
Sadness	413
Neuropathy in feet and hands	401
Reflux or heartburn	385
Changing symptoms	381
Partial or complete loss of sense of taste	375
Phlegm in back of throat	361
Abdominal pain	344
Lower back pain	319
Shortness of breath or exhaustion from bending over	318
Nausea or vomiting	314
Weight gain	300
Clogged ears	267
Dry eyes	264
Calf cramps	258
Tremors or shakiness	257

Sleeping more than normal	254
Upper back pain	253
Floater or flashes of light in vision	249
Rash	247
Constant thirst	246
Nerve sensations	243
Tinnitus or humming in ears	233
Changed sense of taste	221
Sharp or sudden chest pain	210
Confusion	205
Muscle twitching	204
Feeling irritable	197
Weight loss	195
Post nasal drip	191
Dry throat	190
High blood pressure	181
Dry or peeling skin	179
Swollen hands or feet	167
Heat intolerance	165
Mouth sores or sore tongue	162
Neck muscle pain	155
Chills but no fever	154
"Hot" blood rush	152
Phantom smells	152
Bone aches in extremities	139
Feeling of burning skin	135
Extreme pressure at base of head or occipital nerve	128
Swollen lymph nodes	125
Brain pressure	119
Kidney pain	115
Spikes in blood pressure	104
Costochondritis	98
Hand or wrist pain	96
Bulging veins	95
Abnormally low temperature	91
Mid-back pain at base of ribs	84
Burning sensations	83
Jaw pain	80
Painful scalp	80
Arrhythmia	78
Low blood oxygen	77

 SCHOOL OF MEDICINE SURVIVOR CORPS

 SCHOOL OF MEDICINE SURVIVOR CORPS

Cold burning feeling in lungs	74
Cracked or dry lips	73
Goiter or lump in throat	70
Foot pain	69
Eye stye or infection	63
Covid toes	59
Low blood pressure	58
Dry scalp or dandruff	52
Kidney issues or protein in urine	47
UTI	45
Hormone imbalances	44
Thrush	42
Gerd with excessive salivation	41
Personality change (drastic)	41
Herpes, EBV, or Trigeminal neuralgia	38
Anemia	37
Elevated thyroid	33
Bilateral neck throbbing around lymph nodes	32
Syncope	31

Executive Corner

MENTORSHIP

A new year is upon us and we have the privilege to be alive and working, oh what a blessing! We as nurses are all where we are today because someone or a group of people encouraged, supported or advised us. That in a nutshell is Mentorship.

Mentorship, can sometimes be viewed as a foreign concept but it is in our everyday life. As professionals in the Healthcare industry, we come in contact with so many people who are either interested in what we do or have friends and families who are aspiring to be in our industry.

The challenge for us lies in how we assist those aspiring individuals to start and progress to where we are today.

For example, there are students who want to know more about the Nursing profession including which courses, programs, and resources are available and gaining access to the necessary information.

Furthermore, there are Licensed Practical Nurses who want to become Registered Nurses and need guidance regarding what schools are available to them, cost and flexibility. In other scenarios, there are Registered Nurses who want to achieve their Bachelors, Masters, Nurse Practitionership and Doctoral programs who also need information and direction.

As a group of nurses in NAGNF, we are all at different levels of education, training and specialties and are in excellent positions to assist our colleagues in achieving their dreams. We can help each other by mentoring and having programs of tailored mentorship that can benefit us all.

In discussing Mentorship, it behooves me to introduce myself. Adelaide Okoree-Siaw is my name. Thirty-two plus years ago, I trained as a Nurse in Ghana. Presently, I work in Arizona as an Educator and I am the current Vice-President and Co-Founder of NAGNF. Many years ago, I envisioned all of the Nursing organizations in America coming together under one umbrella and creating a formidable force to reckon with in order to approach the health care challenges in our motherland, Ghana. In order to achieve my vision, I dialogued with people I knew but did not get anyone to support me. However, I was not discouraged. One day at a Physician's conference I was introduced to someone and today we have the formidable vision-driven NAGNF!

The beginning of every endeavor is very difficult and I am thankful that we now have a full-fledged organization. One day we shall all stand proud because of what we have been able to achieve in bringing about a change in our community. Let us all spread the word about NAGNF and help to promote unity for all Nurses under one roof.

Let us all start today, with the mindset of making our communities great by mentoring just one person in any area of our lives and at the end of the year evaluate and see the growth we have contributed to in our own small way. SUCCESS TO US ALL!



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