

Vaccines and Other Entanglements with Abortion



As the new COVID-19 vaccines are being rolled out, several people have told me, “I don’t want a vaccine with any connection to abortion.”

This is a valid sentiment that most of us would likely echo. At a minimum, it should serve as an important “call to action” for each of us during the course of this pandemic. Even if we decide to get inoculated with a vaccine that was produced using abortion-derived human cell lines — which for a serious reason and in the absence of alternatives would not be unethical — we still face a real duty to push back and make known our disagreement with the continued use of these cells by researchers in the pharmaceutical industry and academia.

We can do this in several ways.

We can write a letter to the editor to heighten public awareness, or contact the pharmaceutical companies that make vaccines, urging them to discontinue their use of abortion-derived cell lines. If they do so, we should also thank them.

We can similarly initiate discussions with friends or relatives who work in research labs about whether their company or university uses cells derived from abortions.

One of the “silver linings” of the COVID-19 pandemic is that it affords us the opportunity to raise awareness about these moral concerns and improve the way that biomedical research is conducted by scientists.

As one bishop I was speaking with reminded me recently: “We need to teach, educate and confront this issue more widely. It’s everyone’s duty.” Such efforts will help build real momentum for change.

I’m often asked whether sample letters are available to help with writing to vaccine manufacturers who use abortion-derived cell lines. An example would be:

“I am writing in regard to your COVID-19 vaccine. It is my understanding that a cell line originally derived from an abortion is being used in the production of your vaccine. I am contacting you to request that your company stop relying on these cells in the pharmaceutical work that you carry out. Please understand that as one of your potential customers, I am *very* concerned about these issues. It is my understanding that alternative, non-abortion-derived cell sources are available or could be made available. It is important for all of us to show our respect for the remains of those children whose lives were taken prematurely, and one way we can do this is by avoiding these cell lines in scientific research and pharmaceutical development. Thank you.”

Archbishop Joseph Naumann, Archbishop of Kansas City and Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities, has also prepared a more detailed letter (available at: <https://www.usccb.org/resources/Letter-to-FDA-urging-ethical-COVID-vaccines.pdf>) that addresses the need to develop vaccines free of entanglements with abortion.

While such entanglements remain a significant concern, we also need to be aware how some of our daily activities may have a much more direct connection to the abortion industry.

Dr. Melissa Moschella recently observed how getting a vaccine made with the help of an abortion-derived cell line has “less connection to the ongoing evil of abortion than other actions we engage in on a regular basis, such as doing business with the many companies that donate money directly or indirectly to Planned Parenthood, including Nike, Heinz, Energizer, Clorox, Facebook, JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America, CVS, Walmart, Liberty Mutual, Aetna, and hundreds of [others](#).”

To put it another way, each time we purchase Tostitos/Frito Lay products, fill our gas tank with ExxonMobil gas or buy Pepsi products, our

contribution to the continuation of abortion is significantly more direct than when we receive a vaccine manufactured with abortion-derived fetal cell lines. Each of these large consumer-oriented corporations make large financial contributions to Planned Parenthood, which promotes and directly performs the killing of unborn children in the United States and in other countries.

Widespread corporate collusion in the evil of abortion does not, of course, mitigate the ethical concerns about using cell lines taken from fetal cadavers to produce vaccines. But it does represent another important area where letter-writing, boardroom votes, boycotts, and other focused efforts by stockholders, employees and customers can make a difference when it comes to scaling back the support mechanisms that Planned Parenthood and other abortion-minded organizations rely on.

As the Vatican emphasized in its recent “Note on the Morality of Using Some Anti-Covid-19 Vaccines,” the reception of an inoculation made from abortion-derived cells “does not in itself constitute a legitimation” of the practice of abortion. Receiving the stick of the needle today does not mean we are somehow cooperating in an abortion that occurred decades ago and for reasons independent of vaccine production.

Each of us has a serious obligation to witness to the inviolability of human life. We need to take the time to speak up so that future vaccines and medicines will be developed without any reliance on abortion-derived materials.

Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D. earned his doctorate in neuroscience from Yale and did post-doctoral work at Harvard. He is a priest of the diocese of Fall River, MA, and serves as the Director of Education at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See www.ncbcenter.org and www.fathertad.com.