

Thank you, Senator Johnson, Senator Blumenthal, and the subcommittee for inviting me to testify on the development and safety of the COVID-19 vaccines.

I am Dr. Joel Wallskog, a board-certified orthopedic surgeon, now medically disabled after one dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. Before the pandemic, I enjoyed a successful practice in Wisconsin, performing over 800 major surgeries annually. Trusting health authorities, my practice followed COVID-19 guidelines, delaying surgeries and even temporarily closing. I proudly elected to get vaccinated and within a week, I developed leg weakness, numbness, and substantial balance loss, leading to falls, including one while treating a patient. Diagnosed with transverse myelitis—a spinal cord lesion at T8-T9—I was stunned that my providers dismissed any vaccine link, despite news of similar cases halting the AstraZeneca trial in the UK. Four years later, while I can walk again, I have been diagnosed with dysautonomia and an undefined autoimmune disorder, both debilitating conditions affecting multiple body systems. I remain medically retired, the career I loved and worked so hard for is now gone.

In 2021, federal health agencies assured Americans that COVID-19 vaccine trials were rigorous and closely monitored, with rigorous post-market surveillance. They also claimed a robust safety net would handle what they said were “rare,” and mostly “mild” injuries with monitoring, follow-up, and financial aid. After my own vaccine injury, I learned the hard way that nothing could be farther from the truth.

In my own battle to restore my health, I could not find a single reliable source of information from the CDC, FDA, or NIH. Further, answers did not come from my medical teams, the media, or even medical journals. Rather the answers were being pieced together by tens of thousands of vaccine injured patients huddled together in social media-based support groups, who were constantly fighting for their right to simply exist.

I am now co-chairman of React19 which is a national science-based,¹ non-political, non-profit that represents over 36,000 Americans seriously injured by the COVID-19 vaccines. Our mission is to provide financial, physical, and emotional support. This gives me a unique perspective to share the collective experience of those who have been harmed, not just by the COVID-19 vaccines themselves, but also the United States government.

React19 surveyed our 36,000 members, asking if the FDA takes vaccine injury seriously. 100% said “false,” not even one person voted favorably. The vaccine-injured share a uniform story: we did our duty for our country, became injured, disabled, or died. We further reported to VAERS and VSAFE, repeatedly contacted our elected officials, and applied to the Countermeasure

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Injury Compensation Program (CICP), only to face silence from VAERS,² no response from VSAFE, ghosting by own representatives,³ and a 98% rejection rate from the CICP.⁴

The many cries for help were ignored.

Some were studied at the NIH, in a program under Fauci, where they were diagnosed with vaccine complications⁵ never disclosed to the public, despite promises that the NIH would do so. Privately, the agencies said neurological conditions need early recognition and intervention, while publicly they remained silent often even denying they were treating vaccine injuries. Rather they promoted boosters and high safety claims, while the White House directed social media to censor “true stories of vaccine injury,”⁶ relegating *NIH confirmed* injuries into silence. That silence by health authorities, elected representatives and even our own White House has resulted in more severe health outcomes, and worse for many - death.

The PREP Act shields drug companies from injury liability, and strips Americans of their constitutional right to due process and jury trial. This liability shield places the responsibility squarely on the US government to address this crisis. Our constitutional rights must be replaced with *effective* safety monitoring and compensation. Today these programs are failures. Congress must urgently reform these failing systems, *or* remove itself as the middleman and repeal the PREP Act.

An analysis of clinical trial data shows that for every 800 vaccinated,⁷ one suffers a serious adverse event. We are here today to end the silence for the 1 in 800. It is time to stop politicizing vaccine injuries and start building meaningful recognition, research, competent care, and fair and just compensation.

At React19, we say we’ve had negative reactions but seek positive actions. I will not stop until these humanitarian goals are met.

References:

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