

The same month I received my first COVID mRNA vaccine, I was featured in *The Wall Street Journal's* "What's Your Workout?" column for aerial circus arts. I was strong, healthy, and thriving.

Just three weeks after my second dose, I couldn't go up a flight of stairs without gasping for air. I became short of breath doing even simple things— walking, standing and even speaking. I had constant chest pressure, arrhythmias, and overwhelming fatigue. I can't overstate the misery. It felt like my body was failing me.

I was experiencing right heart failure. Still, I questioned myself—was this real, or in my head? Then an echocardiogram confirmed the damage. I was relieved that it wasn't imagined—and stunned to realize: this is likely how I die.

The diagnosis was pulmonary hypertension. I had damage and narrowing of the blood vessels in my lungs restricting blood flow and straining the heart. This isn't like regular high blood pressure. Pulmonary hypertension is usually progressive and fatal even with treatment. There is no cure. It felt like a death sentence.

I reported my case to VAERS—the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System. Most doctors I know had never heard of it. Fewer understood that it carries mandatory reporting requirements. I was never taught about VAERS in medical school. I'm told it still isn't.

Eventually, VAERS collected my medical records. I expected to hear from the FDA or CDC. I never did. I believed in the system. I believed I would be heard. When I wasn't, I channeled that disbelief into collaborating with *The BMJ* on a report about the system's failures. What I learned is chilling: if you are harmed, you're on your own.

I've had to adapt. Maybe some of the novel treatments I tried helped. On the outside, I look fine. I've returned to running, even to aerial arts. That brings me joy—but also unease. I've lost half my lung capacity. If I can look this normal while carrying that much damage—how many others are out there, suffering silently?

In researching my condition I found the Georgetown scientist who predicted my specific problem. The very same month of the vaccine rollout he warned that spike protein exposure—whether from the virus or the vaccine—could harm the blood vessels in the lungs and placenta. Spike protein itself from the SARS-1 virus also caused vascular damage in animals.

I learned many hospitalized COVID patients developed pulmonary hypertension. Autopsies showed the same kind of lung vessel damage I had. Long COVID patients with persistent breathlessness have the same findings. As in my case their symptoms improve but the damage remains.

We now know the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein can damage the lungs, heart, and brain in animals. It is toxic. Irrefutably so. I know that's uncomfortable to hear.

One study found that athletes who got mRNA boosters saw drops in aerobic capacity—equivalent to aging five to ten years—in just one week. Why is this?

I now see colleagues and patients struggling with daily tasks. Many are limited by unexplained shortness of breath. Could this be a spectrum of vascular damage like what happened to me?

These are urgent questions.

This is not normal aging. This is not simple deconditioning. Until we study this systematically we won't know how many have been injured—by COVID, or by the spike protein itself.

Our medical system must honor its foundational oath: “Do no harm.” When harm does occur, the right thing is to recognize it, acknowledge suffering, and work to relieve it—while advancing research into safer therapies.

Government must serve as a safeguard—restoring accountability, transparency, and public trust.

And above all, every medical decision must be grounded in **truly informed consent**. Patients deserve and demand clear, honest information. The freedom to decide what's right for them is a right. Mandatory medicine isn't medicine.

Acknowledgment matters. Being seen, heard, and believed—that is the first and perhaps most important step in healing.

To others here who've been harmed: I see you. While our injuries differ I understand the suffering and isolation that comes when the system meant to protect you instead abandons you.

I believe you.

Senator Johnson and members of the committee, thank you for giving us this opportunity to start to heal.