



AGING TODAY Some Medications Can Compromise COVID Vaccine Effectiveness



By Bob Roth, Managing Partner of Cypress HomeCare Solutions

Two weeks ago, on July 18 our 85-year-old father began having a weakness that completely sapped him of his energy and he could barely move. Less than 24 hours later, we called 911 as his weakness led to a fall. We thought this all could be connected to a cardiac issue. Once he was taken to the hospital, he had a complete workup, and his doctors couldn't figure out what was causing his weakness. Literally 16 hours after entering the emergency department, the results of his COVID test from the day before came back positive.

So, how could our father get COVID, he was vaccinated. He completed his second of two vaccinations in early February. We could never imagine our father would be one of those breakthrough cases. These events are considered rare for fully vaccinated people. But how rare are they?

And how did our father get COVID? As we started to review our father's recent health challenges, it wasn't too difficult to figure out what had happened. Our dad was prescribed a three-week course of oral steroids to address what we thought was a psoriatic arthritic event. While the medication took away many of his aches and pains, we learned later the drug suppressed his immune system, leaving our father with virtually no antibodies or protection from the virus.

This health event precipitated our daughter Samantha-Jo (Sami-Jo) Roth, a reporter in Washington DC, to look further into this issue. She reported there's growing evidence showing certain medications could compromise COVID-19 effectiveness. (<https://www.baynews9.com/fl/tampa/coronavirus/2021/07/30/certain-medications-could-compromise-covid-19-vaccines-effectiveness>)

Dr. Aftab Khan, a physician that practices Internal medicine in Florida, said immunocompromised patients taking drugs like oral steroids may compromise the vaccine's effectiveness, making it a "very danger-

ous situation for them."

In addition, he said, "if you're going to prescribe someone steroids, you have to tell them and you have to warn them that they can lower your immune system and you have to take extra precautions."

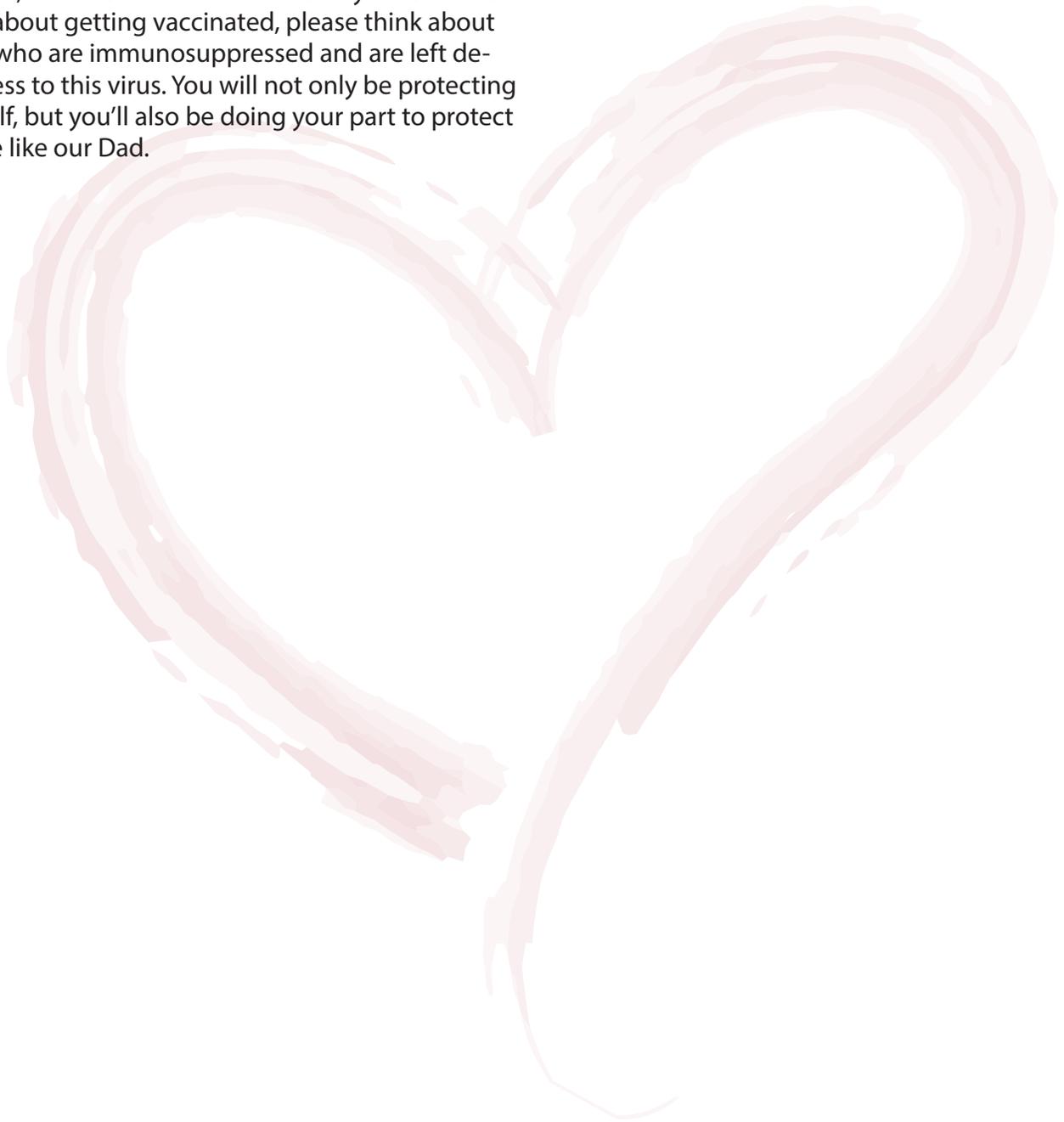
Scientists still don't have a full picture on how these drugs affect the vaccine's effectiveness, but the evidence is growing. Individuals who are immunocompromised should be concerned, they are at a higher risk for negative outcomes if infected with COVID-19, they are less likely to experience an adequate response to the vaccine. Individuals that are taking immunosuppressive medications should be equally concerned, they need to limit their exposure to the general public during their medication regimen so that they do not get infected. I encourage you if you are either immunocompromised or about to or presently taking immunosuppressive medication to seek advice from your primary care physician.

The more contagious "Delta" variant is taking hold of our country and the numbers are rising. Federal, state and local governments are once again re-evaluating mask mandates. We see private businesses; like hospitals mandating vaccinations, with the federal government thinking about mandating vaccinations with the people that they employ. There is a new variant "Lambda" that has the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) concerned.

After spending 8 days in the COVID-19 ward at HonorHealth, our father is at home recuperating and regaining his strength. The care he received at HonorHealth was extraordinary - the nurses, the doctors, and staff were amazing. His physicians tell us if he had not been vaccinated, he certainly would not be with us today.

COVID-19 vaccines are the way we will end this pandemic.

In order to accomplish this, scientists say we need at least 70% of our population to be vaccinated. But we still have a long way to go. We are still unsure of how exactly our father became infected with this virus. One thing is certain, the more people that get the shot, the safer it is for our father. If you're on the fence about getting vaccinated, please think about those who are immunosuppressed and are left defenseless to this virus. You will not only be protecting yourself, but you'll also be doing your part to protect people like our Dad.



This column was published in [Lovin' Life After 50](#) and [Jewish News](#) as Cypress' monthly contribution.

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