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Letter to the Editor

Could the adverse outcomes of “seasonal influenza” vaccination in South Korea have an effect on the COVID-19 pandemic?

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Dear Editor

Corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory disease that is difficult to differentiate from influenza symptoms. The COVID-19 pandemic has not yet finished and “seasonal influenza” will be coming from December to February. Several countries such as South Korea and Singapore are prepared for the “Flu” vaccination to minimize common influenza disease. The COVID-19 pandemic would become a “double attack” if most people didn’t not take the “Flu” vaccine in the winter of this year, also “seasonal influenza” might kill at least 3,000 South Koreans. It’s the same situation in other countries, people have a high risk of getting “Flu” as well as

developing the COVID-19 complications, so they should be vaccinated with the seasonal influenza vaccine for prevention.

Nonetheless, there is another issue that occurred in South Korea. According to the South Korean Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) report, at least 59 people died after injection of the “Flu” vaccine [1]. Why did this happen? Did any safety issues appear in the vaccine? The “Flu” vaccine has been proven to be safe with rare side effects such as people may get Guillain-Barré Syndrome causing muscle weakness and paralysis [2] which is around one in a million chance. It is very rare for anyone to have a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis). People died after getting “Flu” vaccine shots, they were 60 years old or above with pre-existing health problems and chronic diseases including hypertension, heart disease, stroke, respiratory diseases, and diabetes.

Around five million doses of the “Flu” vaccine in South Korea have been disposed of as they were not stored at the recommended temperature [3]. The “Flu” vaccine is a sensitive bio-active substance that is easily degraded, loses potency, and effectiveness when temperatures are too cold or hot when directly exposed to the sunlight. The required temperatures range from +2°C to +8°C, otherwise, the “Flu” vaccine will be

denatured. These conditions are cumulative, permanent, and irreversible. Therefore, “Flu” vaccine storage and transportation methods are also important to prevent its properties from being changed [4].

We believe that the “seasonal influenza” will have the effect of exacerbating COVID-19 cases. Because of the bad news messages received about the flu vaccination, also would like to point out that policymakers should pay close attention to this aspect and deal with anti-vaccination campaigns. Prevention is better than cure, so it is intense for those in need to vaccinate with the “Flu” vaccine as the mortality rate of seasonal “Flu” is much higher than COVID-19. The “Flu” vaccine injection program must go-on, otherwise, “seasonal influenza” will become another serious outbreak.

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