

Catherine Dumont

# VACCINES

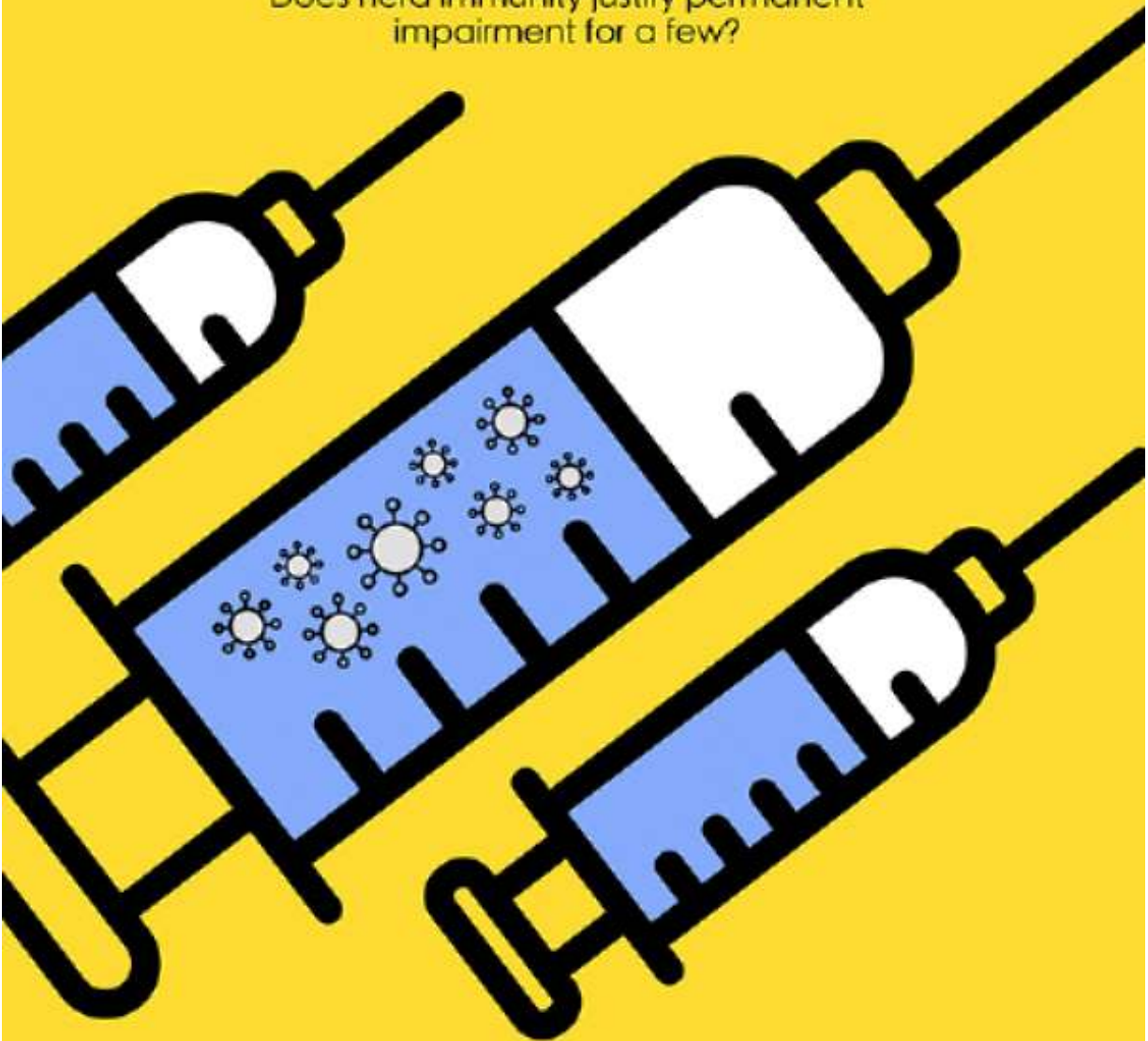
Does herd immunity justify permanent  
impairment for a few?



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# **Controversies for and against**

Vaccines have been at the center of debates for at least a couple of decades, although they were questioned and rejected already from their first versions. The dominant public health narrative focuses on the fact that vaccines have eradicated diseases that devastated entire populations, such as smallpox or, closer in time, polio, and that annually save between 2 and 3 million lives. But this vision contrasts with that of individual rights, the right to be informed and to choose what treatment or vaccine we or our children will receive. Vaccines are imposed in the countries, by law and mandatory or recommended vaccination schedules, and it seems that any experience or opinion contrary to this line can only be discredited for not having a scientific evidence base or for simply being contrary to the common good.

According to the WHO, vaccine hesitancy is one of the 10 most important threats to global health. It is a complex and delicate subject, with many interests at stake. The narrative installed in the media, in presidents and legislators, in the medical community and in society as a whole, says that vaccines are “on the side of good”. As we will see later “the vaccines” are many, they are different, they work in different ways and they also generate a wide range of side-effects. But in the totalizing narrative that places vaccines on the side of good, all question, opinion or suspicion is immediately taken to the evil side: “anti-vaccines”. In this scenario, parents who have seen their children lose eye contact or the ability to express themselves after receiving a dose of MMR vaccine, girls

who fainted or convulsed after receiving a dose of the HPV vaccine, doctors who are suspicious about vaccines recently added to the mandatory schedule, who denounce the lobby of the pharmaceutical industries and the fabulous business of a vaccine being approved, or simply all those who demand that they should be informed of all possible adverse reactions and should be given the possibility to choose to whether or not receive vaccines, they are all enemies of humanity, enemies of the common good and enemies of their peers. Those who speak of Guillain-Barré Syndrome, a disease that causes paralysis and that has been mainly related to the flu vaccine, but also to other vaccines such as typhoid fever, are also “anti-vaccines”.

