

React19 members Lobby D.C. Politicians, FDA

Sixteen advocates for people injured by COVID-19 vaccines recently took a three-day trip to Washington, D.C. to meet with a number of elected representatives and Food and Drug Administration officials. Seeking recognition of those harmed by the COVID-19 vaccines, they met to lobby for the inclusion of that group in the Vaccine Injury Compensation Program (VICP).

The group included members of React19, an organization which represents thousands of Americans injured by vaccines. A couple who lost their adult son, a father who lost his 16-year-old son, and Dr. Joel Wallskog, an orthopedic surgeon, were just a few of those who made up the group that went to Washington.

Wallskog was exposed to and tested positive for COVID-19 antibodies in the fall of 2020, but remained asymptomatic. Per CDC recommendations, he waited three months after his antibody diagnosis for his first COVID-19 jab, but when he finally received the Moderna vaccine, he developed numbness, weakness, and balance difficulties.

By January 2021 he had severe lower thoracic back pain and was diagnosed with transverse myelitis, a neurological condition that the [Mayo Clinic describes](#) as inflaming both sides of one section of the spinal cord, with a demyelinated lesion at the T8-T9 level. He was treated with high dose steroids, Intravenous Immunoglobulin, and physical therapy, but showed no improvement.

Wallskog was once a physically active person, hiking, biking, and waterskiing when he wasn't working in his thriving medical practice. But he can no longer work and is on long-term

disability. Despite these constraints, Wallskog helped found [React-19](#).

Asked how many U.S. residents may have had an adverse COVID-19 vaccine reaction, Wallskog said the true incidence is unknown. "You can look at [Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System](#) data," he said. "However, most people agree that underreporting to VAERS is common." Indeed, many vaccine-injured report that their doctors are wary of linking patients' adverse reactions to the COVID-19 vaccines and do not report them to the VAERS program. "The point is that without mandatory reporting, penalties to nonreporting, and follow up on VAERS reports, the incidence is unknown," Wallskog said.

Even if it was known, it seems unlikely that anyone would receive compensation for their adverse effects, for "COVID-19 vaccines are exempt from the VICP," Wallskog said. The government allowed pharmaceutical companies to be immune from offering this compensation because of the presumed urgent need for the COVID-19 vaccines.

"Compensation is available on a limited basis through the CDC," Wallskog said. "However, the CDC has not paid out even one claim to date for U.S. citizens injured by the Covid-19 vaccines."

With his advocacy, Wallskog helped lay the groundwork for these meetings in Washington, D.C. In November 2021 he attended a round table event at the U.S. Senate with many others who suffered adverse effects, and thus became passionate about helping vaccine-injured folks.

"We are advocating for the recognition of Covid-19 long-haul and vaccine-injured, so that we can access essential healthcare and gain access to vaccine injury compensation program," a statement from Wallskog's organization, React19 says. "The government is obligated to ensure that those harmed are taken care of. However, these existing government programs

are broken, time is running out for those suffering and help is needed promptly. In addition to remedies for these programs, we actively seek research, medical recognition and agency accountability.”

Compared to how governments of other countries treat the COVID-19 vax-injured, the U.S. seems third rate. Thailand, Taiwan, Italy, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Japan are among the many countries that are compensating these individuals, React19 reports. Indeed, 92 countries allow their citizens “to claim compensation through Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.” Although the U.S. is one of the original donors to Gavi, its citizens have yet to receive any compensation for their vaccine injuries.

React19 members who visited Washington declined to name the legislators they spoke with, but have said they were both congress members and senators. To “out” those reps and perhaps enlarge their group with other legislators who object to how vax-injured have been treated, maybe it’s time for each of us to email or call and ask our federal legislators: What are you doing, right now, for the vaccine-injured?

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