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Happy Thanksgiving! And hail to the pharmaceutical and biotech industries – and the scientists!

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At Risk for Huntington's Disease

HD is a genetically caused brain disorder that causes uncontrollable bodily movements and robs people's ability to walk, talk, eat, and think. The final result is a slow, ugly death. Children of parents with HD have a 50-50 chance of inheriting the disease. There is no cure or treatment.

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SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2020

Happy Thanksgiving! And hail to the pharmaceutical and biotech industries – and the scientists!

Thanksgiving this year is going to be radically different for many Americans, including my family.

I will celebrate my favorite holiday just with my wife Regina, home in San Diego.

As it has for many Americans, the COVID-19 pandemic has prevented us from hosting our usual small group of friends.

After eating a healthy brunch, we plan to have a Zoom call with our HD-free “[miracle](#)” [daughter Bianca](#), a junior history major at the University of Pennsylvania. We are ever thankful that Bianca did not have to face the devastating possibility of juvenile HD. We will miss her, but are reassured knowing that she will spend the day with her boyfriend and his immediate family in the East.

We also hope to Zoom with some of our local friends.

However, despite the terrible pall cast by the pandemic over the 2020 holiday season, I feel extremely optimistic that researchers will find a highly effective vaccine for the coronavirus.

The announcements of preliminary data by [Moderna](#) and the team of [Pfizer](#) and [BioNTech](#) revealed that their vaccine candidates reduced COVID-19 infections by 95 percent in clinical trials.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institutes of Allergies and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), [described](#) the Moderna data as “stunningly impressive,” noting that he would have settled for 70-75 percent efficacy in a vaccine.

“It is really a spectacular result that I don’t think anybody had anticipated would be this good,” Dr. Fauci said. He had similar praise for the Pfizer/BioNTech data.

[Huntington's Disease Society of America](#)
[International Huntington Association](#)
[Huntington's Disease Drug Works](#)
[Huntington's Disease Lighthouse](#)
[Hereditary Disease Foundation](#)
[Huntington's Disease Advocacy Center](#)
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Both of these trials use genetic approaches: they introduce the virus's own genes into cells to provoke an immune response.

According to the *New York Times*' [Coronavirus Vaccine Tracker](#), several dozen other companies have embarked on clinical trial programs using some form of approach based on genetics or other cutting-edge strategies. Only ten projects are making vaccines using the traditional approach of injecting weakened or dead coronaviruses.

In all, scientists are testing 54 vaccines in clinical trials, and at least 87 more are under investigation in animals.

Genetics-based approaches are familiar to the HD community, where researchers have investigated the potential of gene silencing drugs for more than a decade. Researchers in the lead program, Roche's historic [GENERATION HD1](#) Phase 3 clinical trial, hope to analyze data in 2022.

When I heard of the [initial reports](#) of Moderna's genetics-based approach, I felt deeply confident that humanity would ultimately defeat the coronavirus.

The potentially record speed in getting a vaccine to the world is testimony to the ingenuity, dedication, and focus of the biotech and pharmaceutical industries, which I have observed with deep interest in my nearly quarter century as an HD advocate and student of the science – and as a writer summarizing the science in simple terms.

In October, posting on Facebook an article on the bold [Triplet Therapeutics clinical trial program](#) – yet another genetics-based effort – I wrote the following: “Hail to the many imaginative and hard-working companies in America's pharmaceutical industry!”

I also salute the scientists involved, and the many pharmaceutical and biotech firms of other nations engaged in the fight against COVID-19 and HD.

Also, we must not forget the millions of doctors, nurses, and other healthcare workers and first responders who have [heroically attempted to hold the line](#) against COVID-19, thus giving the researchers the time necessary to develop the vaccines.

Thanksgiving is our quintessential American holiday. This year, with the pandemic, it takes on a global significance. Across all

cultures and nations, the virus has led us to realize once again our common humanity – and the collective efforts needed to safeguard life for all.



Photo by Bianca Serbin, taken in fall 2009 at the San Diego Botanic Garden ([click here](#) to read more).

Posted by [Gene Veritas](#) at [11:38 PM](#)      

Labels: [Bianca Serbin](#) , [biotech](#) , [clinical trials](#) , [coronavirus](#) , [COVID-19](#) , [GENERATION HD1](#) , [genetic](#) , [history](#) , [Huntington's disease](#) , [pandemic](#) , [pharmaceutical industry](#) , [scientists](#) , [Thanksgiving](#) , [Triplet Therapeutics](#) , [vaccine](#)

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