Viewpoint: COVID vaccines have exceedingly rare but serious side effects. Why didn’t we listen to the people who had bad reactions?

The Covid vaccines, a triumph of science and public health, are estimated to have prevented millions of hospitalizations and deaths. Yet even the best vaccines produce rare but serious side effects. And the Covid vaccines have been given to more than 270 million people in the United States, in nearly 677 million doses.

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Thousands of Americans believe they suffered serious side effects following Covid vaccination. As of April, just over 13,000 vaccine-injury compensation claims have been filed with the federal government — but to little avail. Only 19 percent have been reviewed. Only 47 of those were deemed eligible for compensation, and only 12 have been paid out, at an average of about $3,600.

Some scientists fear that patients with real injuries are being denied help and believe that more needs to be done to clarify the possible risks.

“At least long Covid has been somewhat recognized,” said Akiko Iwasaki, an immunologist and vaccine expert at Yale University. But people who say they have post-vaccination injuries are “just completely ignored and dismissed and gaslighted,” she added.

The rise of the anti-vaccine movement has made it difficult for scientists, in and out of government, to candidly address potential side effects, some experts said. Much of the narrative on the purported dangers of Covid vaccines is patently false, or at least exaggerated, cooked up by savvy anti-vaccine campaigns.

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