

Woman with ‘Life-Altering’ Injuries After COVID Vaccine Teams Up with U.S. Senators to Demand Answers

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Global Research, July 15, 2021

[Children's Health Defense](#) 14 July 2021

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Science and Medicine](#)

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Brianne Dressen, who accumulated more than \$250,000 in medical bills after participating in AstraZeneca’s COVID vaccine clinical trial, is collaborating with two U.S. Senators to get help for others injured by COVID vaccines.

A Utah woman and two U.S. senators are [teaming up](#) to get answers from federal health agencies about [life-altering injuries](#) people have experienced after receiving a COVID vaccine.

[Brianne Dressen](#) is a preschool teacher from Utah who was injured after participating in [AstraZeneca’s](#) COVID vaccine clinical trial in November 2020. She [has accumulated more than \\$250,000 in medical bills as a result of injuries she believes were caused by the vaccine](#).

Dressen [said](#) within one hour of being vaccinated she had tingling down her arm. By the time she got home her vision was blurry and doubled. Her sensitivity became so severe that she had to wear earmuffs and sunglasses all the time.

That’s when things took a turn for the worse. “Things progressed quickly,” Dressen said. She experienced neurological decline, but no one could explain why. After a neurological scan, doctors said it looked as if she had multiple sclerosis (MS).

[According to Mayo Clinic](#), MS is a potentially disabling disease of the brain and spinal cord where the immune system attacks the protective sheath (myelin) that covers nerve fibers and causes communication problems between the brain and the rest of the body.

Dressen lost the use of her legs, as her symptoms worsened. After running several MRI’s, CT scans and lumbar punctures, doctors still had no answers, [ABC4 News reported](#).

Dressen said she spent months teaching herself how to walk, eat and form sentences again — all while she traveled in search of answers.

“The hospital didn’t know what was going on ... none of the neurologists that I saw knew what was going on,” Dressen said. “I called the test clinic several times and they had no idea what was going on.”

Dressen spoke with others who are dealing with the same symptoms after getting vaccinated, and she wants people injured by COVID vaccines to get help.

“I want the CDC to do the right thing and communicate with the medical community so these people can get help,” Dressen said. “I want the public to be able to have the full picture so they can make an informed decision.”

Senators demand answers from CDC, FDA and vaccine makers

Dressen, along with other people who said they were injured by vaccines but “[repeatedly ignored](#)” by the medical community, participated late last month in a [news conference](#) held by Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.).

.[@SenRonJohnson](#) + former Green Bay Packers Ken Ruetters held press conference with families who want to "be seen, heard + believed by medical community" after suffering adverse reactions to COVID vaccines.

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— Robert F. Kennedy Jr (@RobertKennedyJr) [June 29, 2021](#)

Following the news conference, Johnson and Utah Sen. Mike Lee [wrote a letter](#) to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) stating the agencies had ignored requests for assistance and answers from families injured by COVID vaccines.

The Senators [wrote](#):

“The very existence of these infirmities is financially, physically and emotionally debilitating for the afflicted individuals and their families. These individuals have previously expressed to both CDC Director Walensky and Food and Drug Administration Acting Commissioner Woodcock that they desire answers and assistance. Thus far, their requests have been ignored or gone without a substantive response.”

Lee and Johnson said widespread lack of acknowledgement of [adverse events](#) following receipt of a [COVID](#) vaccine has made it nearly impossible for some individuals to obtain the medical treatment they need, and that risks must be disclosed to the medical community and general public.

“If any of the COVID-19 vaccines truly cause adverse events of the severity noted above, even in a small percentage of cases, these risks must be disclosed, particularly to the medical community so that healthcare professionals are properly informed and may provide necessary treatment, care, and information to the general public as they weigh the risks and benefits of being vaccinated,” the Senators wrote.

In the letter, Lee and Johnson asked the FDA and CDC about the adverse events suffered

during clinical trials, disclosed in the FDA's Emergency Use Authorization Memorandum for the [Pfizer](#), [Moderna](#) and [Johnson & Johnson](#) vaccines, as well as reported injuries from the U.S. AstraZeneca trial.

Lee and Johnson asked whether the CDC is working with physicians and researchers at the FDA, National Institutes of Health or other medical research bodies to provide the various individuals who experienced adverse effects vaccine treatment and care.

According to the [most recent VAERS data](#), between Dec. 14, 2020, and July 2, 2021, a total of [438,441 total adverse events](#) were reported to VAERS, including [9,048 deaths](#) and [41,015 serious injuries](#).

Obtaining federal compensation for COVID vaccine injuries is rare

As [The Defender reported](#) July 8, people facing huge medical bills after being injured by a COVID vaccine have few options beyond what their own health insurance covers, because a federal law shields vaccine makers from liability.

People injured by COVID vaccines are asking for help on GoFundMe as the U.S. government shields vaccine makers from liability.

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— Robert F. Kennedy Jr (@RobertKennedyJr) [July 8, 2021](#)

The [National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act of 1986](#) and U.S. Supreme Court Decision in [Russell Bruesewitz et al v. Wyeth et al](#), guaranteed vaccine manufacturers, doctors and other vaccine administrators [have almost no legal accountability](#) or financial liability in civil court when a government recommends or mandates a vaccine that causes permanent injury or death.

In 2005, Congress passed the [Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act](#) (PREP), which [authorizes](#) the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to issue a declaration providing immunity from tort liability for claims of loss caused by medical countermeasures (e.g., vaccines, drugs, products) against diseases or other threats of public health emergencies.

On Feb. 4, 2020, [HHS invoked the PREP Act](#) when it declared COVID-19 to be a public health emergency. On Jan. 21, HHS [amended the act](#), extending the liability shield to include additional categories of qualified persons authorized to prescribe, dispense and administer COVID-19 vaccines authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

In exchange for immunity for vaccine makers, under the PREP Act, the federal government pledged compensation for adverse reactions to COVID treatments and vaccines through a program called the [Countermeasures Injury Compensation Program](#) (CICP), run by HHS.

As [The Defender reported](#) July 1, since the CICP program's inception in 2010, [only 29 claims](#) have been paid, with an average payout of around \$200,000. The other 452 claims (91.4%) were denied. Ten claims won approval but were deemed ineligible for compensation.

Only [about 8%](#) of people who applied to the CICIP with vaccine injuries in the past received payouts, and there are no protections from the U.S. legal system.

Prominent vaccine injury law firm says it can't help people injured by COVID vaccines because COVID vaccines are not covered under the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, forcing many to raise funds for their injuries online. <https://t.co/pob7n5TZiw>

— Robert F. Kennedy Jr (@RobertKennedyJr) [July 2, 2021](#)

HHS forced to post data related to the CICIP

HHS last month [agreed to post data](#) related to the CICIP, thanks to an investigation by Atlanta television news station, 11Alive, an affiliate of WXIA-TV.

For nine months, [11Alive's investigative team](#) reported on the lack of transparency within the CICIP. Last month, the government released data on the CICIP [requested by 11Alive](#) and agreed to make the data available to the public.

As of July 1, [the CICIP reported](#) 1,165 claims filed. According to its website, the CICIP has not compensated any COVID-19 claims. Two COVID-related claims were denied because the applicant couldn't prove the countermeasure caused their injury. One claim was associated with intubation, the other the vaccine. Almost all of the claims are still waiting to be medically reviewed.

"I think people sometimes have a distrust in government and people think that the government is hiding things from them when they're not being transparent," said Melissa Wasser with [Project on Government Oversight](#). "The public has a right to know this information, especially with all of the government resources being used."

The CICIP [website](#) outlines the parameters of the program, which provides compensation for medical expenses, lost employment income and survivor death benefits as "the payer of last resort," covering only what remains unpaid or unpayable by other third parties, such as health insurance.

Under the CICIP program, attorney fees are not covered. There is no court, judge or right to appeal. Those who believe they've suffered an injury from a COVID vaccine only have one year from the date of injury to file a claim.

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