



January 27, 2021

Dear PHSC Faculty, Staff and Students:

In 2014, the Pasco County Commission proclaimed February 1, the first day of heart month, as Rao Musunuru, M.D. Day in Pasco County. The unprecedented proclamation honors nationally recognized cardiologist Dr. Musunuru in perpetuity for his dedication to his patients and to the community he has called home since 1981 – the same year that he began work to establish the acclaimed Heart Institute of Regional Medical Center Bayonet Point. As a member of PHSC's District Board of Trustees for 22 years and a generous contributor to the PHSC Foundation, Dr. Musunuru has remained steadfast in his dedication to the college mission and the welfare of our students.

Alarmed by people who decline to receive Covid-19 vaccinations, Dr. Musunuru asked me to encourage our college community to obtain vaccinations as soon as possible and available. Our conversation reminded me of a well-received guest editorial that Dr. Musunuru authored regarding vaccines. The column, published in the Tampa Bay Times in 2013, is still relevant and even more critical today. Unfortunately, it seems that many will forgo opportunities for vaccination, even though the vaccines are effective against new, highly contagious strains of Covid-19. Vaccination fears are fueled by outrageous conspiracy theories, including the false claims that those vaccinated can contract the virus. We cannot estimate how many lives have been lost, or will be lost, due to ignorant theorists spreading misleading information on the internet.

As a physician on the frontlines of the pandemic, Dr. Musunuru has cared for patients who die alone after weeks of suffering horribly. He does his best to comfort devastated family members – some of whom did not take the coronavirus seriously until it was too late. Please read Dr. Musunuru's compelling article about the unfounded fear of life-saving vaccinations. If you do not plan to receive the Covid-19 vaccination, you may be encouraged to reconsider.

You will not contract Covid-19 from the vaccination. You *will* acquire peace of mind by protecting yourself, family, friends and colleagues from illness, long-term health problems or death. You will also rest assured that you are among the responsible citizens of our community who are pro-actively combating the virus -- expediting our return to the healthier, more normal way of life that we miss so much.

Sincerely,

Timothy L. Beard, Ph.D.
President