

Pilots Need More Cardiac Tests, Aviation Advocates Say, Citing Concerns Over COVID-19 Shots



Dana Holladay (L) and his wife, Meredith, of Holladay Aviation, fly their plane in Jacksonville, Florida, in August 2019. (Meredith Holladay)



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Pilot safety and risk-management are always top-of-mind for Meredith Holladay, the owner of a small flight school.

But the possible side effects of the COVID-19 shots present a new, difficult-to-gauge risk for people in aviation, she said.

“It’s been a known issue,” Holladay told The Epoch Times. “But what do you do about it?”

Holladay and other aviation advocates say that pilots need to be better informed about vaccine-related risks; about tests that can detect hidden problems, and about treatments that can help them continue to fly safely.

That’s why Holladay Aviation and US Freedom Flyers (USFF), an aviation-rights group, offered a free seminar and cardiac-testing event earlier this month—a movement they hope will spread across the aviation world.

More than 100 aviation professionals came to Jacksonville, Florida, for the Jan. 9 safety seminar, believed to be the first of its kind, according to Josh Yoder, president of USFF.

Among the 25 attendees who agreed to be tested, 16 showed markers for myocarditis and heart muscle inflammation, Yoder told The Epoch Times.

He believes that most of the tested people were pilots because the event was tailored to the aviation community.

The tests were done anonymously; no proof of identity or aviation license was required. That’s because the goal wasn’t to do a “study,” Yoder said, the goal was to help people find out whether they might have hidden problems and guide them to get help.

A Classic Standoff

While the Jacksonville event’s findings involved a small population, it’s still disturbing to see myocarditis detected in 64 percent of those tested, said Yoder. To him, it’s another signal that many pilots, flight attendants, and other people may be suffering from undetected cardiac issues, even with no symptoms.

In 2021, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) acknowledged reports of a rise in myocarditis following COVID-19 injections, especially among younger males. In a statement updated on Jan. 23, the CDC called the shots “safe and effective,” and declared that serious side effects are “rare.”

Also, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration recently extended a study of possible vaccine-related heart inflammation.

However, long before the pandemic, studies “implicated myocarditis in sudden cardiac death of young adults at rates of 8.6 percent to 12 percent,” according to a 2006 article in the medical journal, *Circulation*.

Yoder and others believe that myocarditis and other health problems could be linked to the COVID-19 shots, even though the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) declared them safe for pilots.

The FAA set a 48-hour “no-fly” period for pilots who received the injections; The Epoch Times’ Freedom of Information Act request, seeking justification for that rule, has been pending since September.



A nurse prepares a dose of a COVID-19 vaccine in Coventry, England, on April 22, 2022. (Jacob King – WPA Pool/Getty Images)

The Epoch Times is also trying to discover why the FAA recently changed an acceptable heart test standard for pilots. Some people suspect the change was made in response to pilots’ heart test readings changing, possibly because of vaccine side effects.

So far, the FAA has given only a general response to questions about its reasons for the change.

On Jan. 17, the FAA said in an email: “The FAA’s Federal Air Surgeon determined that pilots and air traffic controllers can safely receive the Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson or Novavax vaccine. ...When making changes to medical requirements and guidance, the FAA follows standard processes based on data and science.”

Yoder says that all actors in the pilot-vaccine situation are locked in a classic “Mexican standoff;” everyone stands to lose.

“That’s what makes this so difficult to address,” he said.

Based on the Jacksonville event’s findings and personal contacts with hundreds of pilots, Yoder said pilot health cries out for more attention from all angles.

“Everybody has a liability here,” he said. “The FAA has liability for even allowing these vaccines for pilots. The airlines have liability for mandating it. The unions have liability for not protecting us from the companies and the government. And the pilots have liability for taking it.”

Yoder’s group is pushing for the FAA to provide “amnesty” for vaccinated pilots, covering their wages while health problems force them to go on disability.

Further, in a letter dated Dec. 15, 2021, a team of experts, assembled by Yoder’s group, called upon the FAA to require additional cardiac screenings for vaccinated pilots. More than a year later, Yoder said the agency had taken no such action and had not replied. The Epoch Times has also sought a response from the FAA.

Pilots Command Airplane, Own Health

Pilots know—just from common sense—that they should disqualify themselves from flying if they aren’t feeling well. Also, federal regulations hold every pilot responsible for becoming familiar with “all available information concerning that flight.”

That includes any health issues that the pilot might have.

Yoder said that pilots are painfully aware that any health issue can temporarily or permanently disqualify them from their livelihood. But he said pilots need to find out what is going on with their health, regardless of vaccine status.

At the Jacksonville event, one pilot in his 20s took a heart test showing he had the marker for “severe” myocarditis, Yoder said. That pilot was not vaccinated—and had very recently passed an FAA-required medical exam.



A Boeing 737 MAX airplane takes off on a test flight from Boeing Field in Seattle on June 29, 2020. (Karen Ducey/Reuters)

Pilots are obligated to disclose any health issues to the FAA.

Even though pilots might be fearful of undergoing the tests, it’s important to learn “where they stand so that they can receive proper treatment,” Yoder said.

Failure to find out could mean a pilot loses his or her life or causes a tragedy for others, he said.

“There are protocols; this isn’t a death sentence,” Yoder said. “This doesn’t mean that you lose your flight medical (authorization). This means that you now understand you have an issue, and you can treat it.”

The Mayo Clinic says that early detection of myocarditis is crucial in preventing long-term heart damage. Depending on the severity of the condition, treatments range from prescription drugs to surgeries.

In addition to relying on traditional medical treatments, some pilots have seen benefits from nutrition-based supplements, such as Cardio Miracle, to counteract inflammation, Yoder said. Representatives of that company spoke at the pilot event. Their product is “based on a 1998 Nobel Prize-winning discovery,” with benefits documented by scientific studies, its website says.

No Backup for Small Aircraft

Holladay notes that large commercial passenger airliners fly with two pilots while smaller “general aviation” aircraft typically have a single pilot in control—with no backup. More than half of the nation’s pilots fall into the general aviation category.

Since January 2020, Holladay Aviation has provided 20,000 hours of flight and ground instruction without incident, and never used masks or required vaccinations, Holladay said. Most of the school’s flight instructors and students caught the COVID-19 virus and “all recovered at home and returned to flying,” Holladay told seminar attendees.

As of Jan. 17, the FAA stated that it had “no evidence of aircraft accidents or incapacitations caused by pilots suffering medical complications associated with COVID-19 vaccines.”

But Holladay sees signs that the pandemic and the COVID shots have increased the potential for such an incident. Even one crash could put a small flight school like hers out of business, Holladay said.

Emerging data points to “a significant risk to health from these injections, and that can cause sudden incapacitation without warning to otherwise healthy people,” she said.

Yet, Holladay says, many pilots are unaware of the ways in which vaccine side effects could suddenly impair their ability to command a safe flight. Experts spoke at length on this topic at Holladay’s safety seminar.

To help educate pilots, Holladay recently added a section to her website warning of “COVID-19 mRNA injection dangers.”

That webpage includes links to a two-part video of the seminar, plus many other sources of information.

Reports of Pilots ‘Blacking Out’

However, Holladay points out that accounts of pilots suffering scary side effects are discussed in aviation circles. Such reports also have been registered with the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). While cautioning that VAERS data is unverified and that anyone can make a report, Holladay quoted VAERS reports from vaccinated pilots. Some wrote that they “blacked out,” and had vision problems, dizziness, and irregular heartbeats.

Holladay believes there is enough evidence to conclude that COVID vaccine effects pose an aviation safety hazard. This is “something that we ought to spend a little more time paying attention to and see if we can figure out a solution,” she said.

Many of Holladay’s clients have applauded the flight school’s “efforts to encourage pilots to take better control of their health and educate themselves about the dangerous short- and long-term side effects of these mRNA injections,” she said.

Several students said they had “no idea they were at risk,” Holladay said. Now they are planning to undergo testing offered by HeartCARE Corp., the same company that conducted tests on pilots at Holladay’s seminar.

Effective Jan. 22, Holladay began requiring that screening for all students and airplane renters who have received at least one COVID-19 shot and “wish to act as pilot in command.”

A receipt for the test is required, but the test result can remain confidential. “It is our hope that this effort will encourage all pilots to get tested, find out where they stand, and get help if necessary,” Holladay’s website says.

A prospective client, who recently retired from her flight attendant job at a major airline, told Holladay she shares concerns about the vaccine's side effects. The flight attendant told Holladay that one of her co-workers was forced to go on long-term disability because of neurological problems that arose after a COVID-19 injection.

Holladay said that flight attendant was “very receptive to our new policy,” requiring vaccinated fliers to get heart function tests.

“I think a lot of people are starting to wake up, and wake up fast,” she said.

Free Tests Were ‘The Right Thing’

Eule Glenn, CEO of HeartCARE Corp., says he started his company to avert the heart-disease losses that he and so many other Americans have suffered. Heart problems afflicted several of his relatives and killed his grandfather.

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Eule Glenn, CEO of HeartCARE Corp., Chattanooga, Tenn., in a photo provided in January 2023. (Eule Glenn)

we ever heard of COVID, COVID vaccinations or anything like that, heart disease was of pandemic proportions,” Glenn said in an interview with The Epoch Times. It remains the No. 1 killer of Americans, he said, “so we’ve had a problem on our hands for a long time.”

When organizers of the Jacksonville pilot event asked Glenn to bring the “multifunction cardiogram,” he originally intended to demonstrate the equipment and to charge a fee for any tests that pilots wanted to have done.

After hearing presentations about the issues pilots are facing, Glenn decided to offer the tests for free. “It was the right thing to do,” he said. Glenn didn’t want the cost to prevent anyone from taking the test. He typically charges around \$500. Some of the tested pilots made donations to help cover travel expenses for the company, which is based in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Why Pilots Are Angry

At the seminar, Glenn said he was shocked to learn that pilots face even stricter medical standards than he imagined. For example, pilots are forbidden from flying after taking popular, seemingly innocuous over-the-counter medicines such as Zyrtec allergy pills or Alka-Seltzer Plus cold medicine. “There are so many safety measures enacted to say, ‘Look, if this goes in your body, you don’t fly the plane,’” Glenn said.

In that context, it’s easy to see why pilots seemed angered over being given an ultimatum: take the COVID vaccines or be fired, Glenn said.

But the vaccine debate is irrelevant to the cardiac testing, he said. “This is an objective test. It doesn’t care how you got what you got; it just reports it.”

His company uses a device that functions like a “smarter” version of the electrocardiogram (EKG).

Manufactured by Premier Heart in New York, the multifunction cardiogram was federally approved in 1995.

Glenn calls it “the first non-invasive, highly accurate tool for the early detection of cardiovascular disease.”

Typically, the test takes less than 10 minutes. The patient lies down. Then a technician clamps sensors to the patient’s ankles and wrists, and attaches a sticky sensor above the heart with five wires leading from it.

The multifunction cardiogram helps detect heart issues. (HeartCARE Corp.)

The machine records five 82-second EKG readings, then sends that data to Premier Heart along an encrypted internet connection.

There, a diagnostic system compares the patient's readings to an extensive database of other readings. The result provides a set of diagnoses and conditions, with 90 percent accuracy, Glenn said.

The report gives a treating physician "guidelines for additional evaluation and treatment," HeartCARE's website says.

Although Glenn is not a medical doctor, his company employs medical professionals.

By consulting with them and reading literature from the American Heart Association, Glenn learned that, “about half the time, the first symptom (of heart trouble) ...is a heart attack itself.”

About one-third of those first-time heart attacks are fatal, he said, adding, “That is a very difficult way for you and your family to learn you have cardiovascular disease.”

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