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- LIZBETH

I waited to get the vaccine because I was pregnant. When I went into labor with Ferran, the hospitals were full because of COVID-19. I had all these ideas of having a natural birth, but the check-in process took so long that by the time I got admitted, I thought, 'Just give me the drugs.' There was a bar down the street from the hospital, and my husband Miguel could see them posting pictures on Facebook. We were in a COVID-19 spike, the hospital was full of COVID-19 patients, and this bar was posting pictures of their crowded bar. Nobody was wearing masks. Miguel would turn his phone to me, I would see the pictures, and my contractions would start. He would turn his phone away, and my contractions would end. I was so frustrated. When my brother-in-law got sick with COVID-19, he was hospitalized for three months. He was on a ventilator for a month and had an embolism and two strokes because of COVID-19. It brought home how isolating COVID-19 can be. How it affects families.

We're a big, close-knit family. It could be the Mexican culture or just how we are, but we're just in each other's business all the time. All the time. In my family, if somebody is sick at the hospital, one of us will be there every day. But with COVID-19 you can't do that. People have been having to say goodbye to their family members on Zoom. They don't get that time to say goodbye. For a whole month, every day we were afraid that we wouldn't be able to go see him and say goodbye if he died. And my sister had COVID-19 too, so during all this we couldn't be with her. We couldn't go over to her house. We can't support family members and nurse them through the process like you could for other diseases. He's doing better. He's back to work, but there's times you can kinda tell. Like there was a person before and a person after.

But he is better. He went from not being able to walk, to now being physically mobile. His stroke and intubation affected his vocal cords and tongue, so he has trouble speaking. He still has long-term effects he's dealing with. The emotional toll it took on my sister Martha and their kids is still there. They're still grasping with it.

When he got home, he had twenty-seven pills that he had to take. Twenty-seven. And Martha's a smart woman, but she had trouble navigating it. It was so much and so many medications. She was also carrying the lift of her business, his business, him not being able to be self-sufficient and bathe and go to the bathroom himself. And their daughter, too, was struggling with all this. It's like she couldn't really enjoy the day-to-day of being in high school. So, it was a lot. And we couldn't be there for each other.

You need to see the reality of what can happen. It made me want to prevent others from getting this sick. I wanted the vaccine, but I was about five months pregnant with Ferran, and there wasn't any data or studies with pregnant women. So, I waited. I wanted to see if there were any potential side effects. And after I gave birth, we were waiting for that data still. So, I waited until Ferran was a month old to get the vaccine and there were studies available of pregnant women and women that were breastfeeding. Now, there's information that antibodies are passed through breast milk. I'm protecting him, and I'm also protecting my parents. They're both over 65, and my mom isn't comfortable speaking English. It can be hard for her to navigate the system and doctor's appointments. So, I worry that if she got sick, things would be harder for her. I was happy I did it.

