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When I had the privilege of serving as the 17th Surgeon General of the United States, I saw close up the amazing disease-fighting advances of modern science. Like all of us, I am deeply grateful to those who have labored tirelessly to fight this pandemic, both on the front lines and to the scientists who have made vaccination possible for so many, so quickly.

I have also been monitoring advances in prevention and risk mitigation from the SARS-CoV-2 virus, specifically with respect to vitamin D. These experts, operating without a public spotlight, have contributed to an impressive open letter explaining the special need for vitamin D during this pandemic. I have reviewed the global COVID-related Vitamin D data provided by many of the signatories, and published my thoughts on the evolving science along with Drs. Thakkar and Umhau in a recent Op-Ed in MedPage Today. I am convinced that this issue is moving beyond mere correlation and should demand immediate attention and further definitive research. However, what we know today seems clear: being deficient in vitamin D appears to increase risk for anyone who contracts COVID-19, and is a special concern for those with darker skin who have a greater risk of vitamin D deficiency.

We are often enamored by high tech treatments but the history of medicine is replete with examples of commonly overlooked basic nutritional physiology. I applaud the signatories' efforts and dedication at raising international awareness about vitamin D. In the face of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic, their encouragement to consider widespread vitamin D supplementation has little chance of harm but a tremendous potential for good.

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