

COVID-19 Health System Updates

January 27, 2021

I'm glad to report that we continue to see bits of good news on both the COVID-19 case count and vaccination fronts. We are still not out of the woods, and the path to get there zigzags a bit, but on balance we are going in the right direction.

Let's talk about vaccination first. The vaccine supply continues to be highly variable, but as of now, we have received enough vaccine to take care of every patient on our schedule through the rest of this week. What happens from there on out is still uncertain. In some cases, we have even been able to get patients vaccinated earlier than they expected. We have also offered new appointments to every patient whose appointment from the January 16 weekend had been canceled and whom we were able to contact.

The big picture is that there is still not enough vaccine right now for every eligible patient in this country who wants it. Every other health system and every state and city health department is grappling with this. Ultimately, it is up to the federal government and the vaccine manufacturers to figure out how to meet the demand, and we will need to be patient while they do so.

In the meantime, I want to make three commitments about COVID-19 vaccines:

1. Whenever we do not have enough vaccine to serve patients who have made appointments, we will reschedule those patients just as soon as we can.
2. Every person—patient and employee—who gets their first dose of vaccine from Mount Sinai will be able to get their second dose here as well.
3. Whatever happens with the patient vaccine supply, we will always have enough vaccine for any eligible employee who wants it.

That is our commitment to each of you and to the patients we serve.

One further note on second doses: We will, as I just said, offer second doses to anyone who gets their first dose from us. But under state guidelines, we cannot give second doses to people who got their first dose elsewhere, even if their first-dose location is no longer operating. If any patients or members of the public call you or your practice with this situation, please refer them to these numbers to find a location for their second dose:

- New York City: 311 or 877-VAX-4NYC (877-829-4692)
- New York State: 833-NYS-4VAX (833-697-4829)

Also, as a reminder, you are currently eligible for vaccination if you are a Mount Sinai faculty or staff member who works onsite, or if you are a voluntary physician or a patient-facing member of a voluntary practice's staff, or if you are a remote worker who is 65 or over.

I know that some of you who are eligible are still trying to decide whether to get vaccinated. You may have concerns about the vaccine approval process or whether vaccination is right for you, given your medical or family situation. There is a legacy of racism and bias in health care that has also contributed to uncertainty about whether new vaccines like these can be trusted.

To address concerns like these, we have launched a new website, mountsinai.org/vaxfacts. It contains questions and answers about the vaccines and personal stories from members of our Mount Sinai family who chose to get vaccinated. It's intended as a resource to help each of you decide for yourselves. We'll be adding to it as we go along, so please check back there often. I do strongly encourage everyone to get the vaccine if appropriate, but I also know this is not an easy choice for many, and we are here for you when you want to talk or you are ready for the vaccine.

One of our own—Ugo A. Ezenkwele, MD, MPH, FACEP, Chief of Emergency Medicine at Mount Sinai Queens—will be a featured expert at a town hall

hosted by WABC *Eyewitness News* tonight at 5 pm to answer questions from viewers and the public about the COVID-19 vaccines. I highly recommend tuning in if you are able to, especially if you or someone you know still have questions about these vaccines.

Now, here's an update on COVID-19 case counts.

The good news is that, as you heard on Friday, New York State test-positivity rates appear to have peaked earlier this month and are now steadily declining. As of yesterday, the seven-day moving averages are 5.6 percent for New York City, 6.9 percent for Long Island, and 6.8 percent for the Mid-Hudson region. All three are down even further since Drs. Davis and Charney reported on them in their Friday message.

As of this morning, we had 509 COVID-19-positive inpatients across the system, 93 of whom were in critical care. These numbers are holding roughly steady, but we know that changes in hospitalizations lag the changes in positive tests by a couple of weeks. So we are cautiously optimistic that they will come down over the next few weeks.

This can't come too soon for all of you who have been working to take care of both our COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 patients. I want to acknowledge just how hard this has been and continues to be, as well as the personal toll it exerts on so many members of our Mount Sinai family. All of us in leadership want to say thank you again for your efforts. And we don't just want to tell you how thankful we are; we want to show you. We're working on some events and activities around this, in conformance with COVID-19 restrictions; stay tuned for details.

The larger community continues to be grateful as well, as shown most recently by this "Hopeful Images From 2020" [photo essay](#) in *The Atlantic*. The third photo shows nurses and other health care workers at Mount Sinai Queens celebrating National Nurses Week back in May. The magazine said they chose this image as part of "an effort to seek out and recognize some of the abundant joy and kindness present in the world around us, even in the midst of a truly

awful year.” If you can’t see the page because of the paywall, a similar photo along with some of the backstory is on [Mount Sinai Today](#).

National Nurses Week seems like a lifetime ago, doesn’t it? So much has happened since May. But *The Atlantic* and its readers haven’t forgotten the extraordinary role you have played in healing our communities. Neither have the city or the world. And they never will.

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