COVID-19 Health System Updates

December 14, 2020

FDA Authorizes First COVID-19 Vaccine

We are extremely pleased to note—as many of you know already—that the Food and Drug Administration has granted emergency use authorization for the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. This means that Mount Sinai and other health care institutions can start offering the vaccine to certain groups of employees as soon as it arrives at our hospitals, which should be as soon as today.

The U.S. Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices and the New York State Department of Health (DOH) have recommended that the highest-risk health care workers be offered the vaccine first. Highest-risk health workers include all individuals—both clinical and non-clinical—with close, prolonged, and repeated exposure to COVID-19 or at higher risk of exposure due to prolonged close contact with patients of unknown COVID-19 status. For example, our teams in the Emergency Departments (ED) will be among the first who are offered the vaccine. This includes the entire ED team from nursing to security to physicians to registrars to embedded environmental services staff and beyond. We have a clear structure for how to identify these individuals to ensure a fair and equitable distribution. Vaccines will continue to arrive at our campuses into the near future and we will receive additional guidance form the state to know exactly which groups of health care workers we can offer vaccines to and when.

For the work units that are first in line to be offered vaccine, your manager or supervisor will let you know when it is your turn to get vaccinated. There is nothing you need to do. We are staggering vaccination across these units so that we can ensure continued coverage while people leave for their vaccine appointments. If your colleague is offered vaccine and you are not, please be

patient; we are following a strict process and will get to you as soon as we can. We are eager to offer this to everyone as quickly as possible.

We will be strictly following the DOH's rules for prioritization, as we are required to, and will not be able to make any exceptions. Both of us look forward to getting vaccinated but will wait until our turn comes up. Over time, our goal is to offer vaccine to all of our faculty, staff, trainees, and students, including voluntary physicians. This will most likely take a few months, but we will go as quickly as we can given the amount of vaccine that we are allotted. Vaccinations will be provided free of charge to all.

We have created a vaccine information website with FAQs about vaccines generally, and the COVID-19 vaccines in particular, as well as an employee website with supplemental information specifically for Mount Sinai faculty and staff. Please visit both to learn more about the vaccine and the process.

We would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of hundreds of people, under the direction of Susan Mashni, PharmD, Vice President and Chief Pharmacy Officer, who have been preparing for this moment since the early fall.

This is a major turning point in our fight against COVID-19, and one that we are proud to have played a role in. Many among our faculty and staff participated in the Pfizer phase 3 clinical trial, and this is the continuation of their dedication to stopping this virus. It will take time to manufacture and distribute this and other vaccines, but this is clearly a historic and important public health turning point. We know we are all eager to start to see normal life returning to our city and our world, and this is a first, but important, step toward that.

Thank you again to all of you for your extraordinary work. This has been a tough, challenging, and at times heartbreaking year, but we are stronger than ever, more unified than ever, and forever grateful to you.

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