

COVID-19 Health System Updates

December 30, 2020, Wednesday

It was two weeks ago yesterday when our Health System hospitals received the very first shipments of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. We had been preparing for that day and had assembled a scheduling and distribution system, in accordance with the New York State Department of Health guidelines, to start vaccinating our front-line hospital-based caregivers at significant risk of exposure to patients with COVID-19 infection. Your colleagues, who comprise that herculean scheduling and distribution system, are now vaccinating nearly 1,000 members of the Mount Sinai family each day. What an extraordinary accomplishment.

And we received more good news this week. The DOH has issued new guidance that will allow us, starting on Monday, January 4, to expand our vaccination efforts to include ambulatory care. We are assembling our lists and getting ready for that, as well. And that includes our voluntary physicians. They are vital members of our Mount Sinai family and community.

The vaccine eligibility guidance is still specific to those who have exposure to patients or to infectious materials. And that means we are not yet permitted to vaccinate every member of our Mount Sinai family working in non-patient-facing roles, who we know are also critical to our mission. But we know that it is a matter of time, hopefully a short time, before we receive the DOH guidance we need, and the amount of vaccine that we need, to offer vaccination to every member of our incredible Mount Sinai family. And in coming months we expect to be able to offer vaccine more widely to the public.

The vaccination process is very much on schedule, with your colleagues working as quickly as possible, balancing the DOH directives on eligibility as well as supply of vaccines. If you haven't been offered vaccine yet, we appreciate your understanding and your patience.

New York City has seen a steady increase in reported COVID-19 cases over the last two weeks, and the number of cases is expected to continue to increase in the coming days. As of this morning, we had 416 COVID-19-positive inpatients in our hospitals, 54

of whom were in critical care. The New York State seven-day average test positivity rates as of yesterday were 5 percent for New York City, 6.8 percent for Long Island, and 6.3 percent for the Mid-Hudson region.

Parking Permits Extended

The New York City Department of Transportation has again extended the validity of the parking permits it issued earlier this year to health care professionals working on COVID-19 response. The permits were to have expired on Thursday, December 31, but will now be **valid until June 30, 2021**. If you have one of these permits, you do not need to do anything; the validity date has been extended, but you will not receive a new document. As a reminder, these permits do not allow parking in “No Standing” zones or bus lanes.

Gift of Song From Lincoln Center

Henry Timms, President and CEO of Lincoln Center, has sent us a special message of gratitude. Throughout the pandemic, Jeremy Boal, MD, and Judith Aberg, MD, have been advising Mr. Timms and his team on keeping the Lincoln Center staff safe. In return, he says, “Thank you for your partnership and guidance this year. Until we can properly thank you on campus, please enjoy this special message, which includes a festive performance by the pianist Llewellyn Sanchez-Werner. *The New York Times* has lauded his talents as ‘sensitive and lyrical,’ and I am so pleased he could record something special for us.” You can view this gift of song [here](#).

There are 100 more COVID-19 patients in our hospitals now than there were two weeks ago, and as I said, we expect this census to keep rising in the near future. To stay ready, we are taking strategic steps, such as transferring patients and moving some procedures to hospitals with more capacity, and continually looking for opportunities to provide cross-training and support. Our most important asset in caring for our patients is all of you, and the selflessness and skill that you bring to your work every day.

Mount Sinai is a very special place, and we are about to show how special yet again during the marathon of the pandemic.

Happy New Year, and stay safe.

Vicki R. LoPachin, MD, MBA
Senior Vice President
Chief Medical Officer
Mount Sinai Health System