

March 5, 2021 Public Health Grand Rounds - N. Bennett COVID HUB questions

Question: Thank you for this tremendous effort. What are most current recommendations/strategies for populations who are immunocompromised and have prior adverse reactions to flu or other vaccines?

Answer: Those who are immunocompromised are considered high priority for vaccination. Those who have had prior adverse reactions to vaccines should consult with their physician. The recommendations depend on the nature of the adverse reactions.

Question: What education/notification efforts are being made to increase vaccination rates to the high risk populations in rural and urban areas?

Answer: There has been a tremendous amount of media and social media attention to the vaccination efforts. In addition, there have been targeted town halls and presentations to specific populations, e.g., health care workers, Latinx population, faith groups, etc. Currently there have been more opportunities for urban populations than rural populations, but Common Ground Health, the community based organization supporting the Task Force, and partnering with the Hub, is developing additional approaches to public outreach. Recently in the City, more than 100 volunteers went door-to-door to have one on one conversations and to assist people in obtaining appointments for vaccine.

Question: It is shocking to me that those who work in shipping are not part of the current approved group for vaccination. They have kept this country running in many case, with tons of potential exposure. What is the reason/logic behind this decision?

Answer: I do believe that they were included in the original definition of essential workers. I cannot explain why NYS has not included them to date.

Question: Is there any move going on to get scheduling organized via one site?

Answer: This has been discussed but is unfortunately not currently feasible. Because there are many, many vaccinators – public and private entities – it has been impossible to coordinate.

Question: What are most current data on ability to transmit the virus after vaccination?

Answer: There are studies that indicate a lower viral load post vaccination, suggesting decreased transmission. However, the trials of the vaccines were designed to look at symptomatic disease and therefore did not include asymptomatic disease, nor quantitative viral loads.

Question: Can you please confirm if you were able to add any Deaf people to the vaccine task force?
Thank you!

Answer: Yes we did!! Thanks so much for your help.

Question: You have such a huge task at hand - and a somewhat unique challenge of reaching both areas that are highly urban and areas that are very rural - all within the FL region - are you hopeful for more autonomy in future - less directive guidance from NYS?

Answer: Yes, we have been advocating for more autonomy from the beginning and I believe that the prospects are good that NYS will allow vaccinators more autonomy. They may still keep the Hubs on a short leash, but we are hopeful that all the cumbersome rules for vaccinators will be reduced.

Question: What special monitoring is needed after COVID vaccine administration for populations who have had adverse reactions to other vaccines?

Answer: It depends on the nature of the previous adverse reaction. Patients that have had moderate allergic reactions to vaccines are monitored for a half hour rather than 15 minutes. Patients who have had anaphylactic reactions to previous vaccines should consult with their health care provider before getting COVID-19 vaccine, and if vaccination is warranted, should only be vaccinated in a safe environment with access to emergency treatment, and will be observed for a longer period of time.

Question: Amazon or Google could probably create an appointment/registration system for mass vaccination in a week. What have we learned about mobilizing technology to make this work?

Answer: Hard question. The decentralized approach to vaccination, consistent with the US system of health care, has not given rise to great technological solutions. Each vaccinator has their own system for scheduling appointments. While NYS does have a system that was intended to be used in the case of a mass vaccination effort, it has not worked for non-NYS run sites. So, in NYS, there has not been a centralized appointment system developed and implemented. Also, and this is a critically important lesson, there is a tremendous digital divide. Many people cannot access on-line appointment systems and so we have had to develop clunky work-arounds.

Question: If a vaccination site tries to turn you away for not having documentation, but you signed an attestation, is there a resource those individuals can access to receive their dose?

Answer: No site in our region should turn anyone away. However, regions are not consistent and sadly, not all registration clerks have gotten correct instruction. This is most likely to happen at the Hawkeye FEMA site since it is a federal site, but I have not heard of this happening recently. I think that the best bet might be to call 211 and they may be able to direct you to someone who can help.

Question: How long should a post Covid person wait to be vaccinated?

Answer: All symptoms should have resolved and isolation period should be over. The CDC recommends waiting no longer than 90 days post COVID infection. Anytime in between is fine. In a vaccine shortage scenario, as we have, it may be beneficial to wait to relieve acute demand for the vaccine.

Question: The ny.gov/vaccine website (haven't known of any other sites to sign up) shows no appointments available for the Dome, Monroe Co site, yet the State Fair Grounds/Onondaga and Potsdam show availability. Why? Did they get more vaccine? Also, if I may suggest, for ny.gov/vaccine site, is very difficult to use, even for IT literate. Have to keep checking, checking, a different approach suggestion, take information and then contact those eligible. Is there a central IT design and efficiencies representation on the task force? Thank you so much for this presentation.

Answer: Please see comments above re technological solutions. Woefully lacking. And we know the NYS site is a pain. The State Fairgrounds has been allocated a lot of vaccine, now has evening hours, and is administering J&J as well. We have no explanation why that site has been allocated so much more vaccine than other sites. Potsdam is a mystery to me. I assume that they too have been allocated more vaccine than their region can use quickly.

Question: Is there a role out plan for how to vaccinate the general public and are sites identifying in advance which vaccine will be offered?

Answer: Yes, there is a plan and a model – details will no doubt be altered as we go along. I do not know if there will be an opportunity to pick your site based on type of vaccine you want. I do anticipate that different sites will have different vaccines but we only learn about allocations on a week to week basis.

Question: My Son who is 03rd year student in UoR is with asthma and he was given a date for the first vaccine on 26th March 2021, is he need to tell that he is has asthmatic, so that the he will be take care with this additional risk?

Answer: I apologize but am not sure I understand the question. Anyone with an underlying condition, such as asthma, is eligible to receive vaccine at this time.

Question: All the folks I am talking about did READ the eligibility criteria, but don't understand what 'remission' means. And didn't know their BMI...or think of themselves as 'obese.' That's why I think some PSAs that talk about this in a more personal way could be very impactful.

Answer: I am not sure where “remission” appears but re BMI, the category is really intended for those patients who have been diagnosed with obesity by their health care provider. Agree that more PSAs would be helpful. In addition, we are sharing all these questions with our communications team for addition to our website and other approaches to answering them in publicly accessible venues.

Thanks to everyone for all the great questions. We are very appreciative of the feedback and will be sure that we include these questions in media/social media/website/talks/ etc etc. Thanks so much, Nana