

COVID Research Update Email – Feb. 25, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

As I'm writing this note, over 1.6 million doses of the coronavirus vaccine are being administered every day, and more than 44 million Americans have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. This is likely to rise very significantly in the next few months. Moreover, both locally and nationally, virus cases are in decline. So it feels like a moment for cautious optimism, which seems in keeping with the gradual, ongoing thawing of winter snow.

At the same time, equity in vaccine access remains a major concern, and the current pace of vaccine administration is simply too slow. As a consequence, many of us now find ourselves waiting to join colleagues, friends and family members who have already been vaccinated.

For myself, I'm grateful that this is even a subject of conversation. To have vaccines so quickly, and that are so effective, is just incredible. It also communicates the value of biomedical research in the most emphatic and meaningful way possible.

I am also happy that my clinical colleagues on the front lines have been vaccinated, as have graduate students who work with infectious SARS-CoV-2, and a sizable fraction of basic science faculty who meet New York State criteria for vaccination. If my own biggest risks are going to Wegmans once a week, and hanging out with my kids, then I can wait a little longer.

Finally, as we move into spring, I'm aware of the rapid spread of highly infectious variant strains and the consequent need for continued vigilance and caution. So in addition to feeling hopeful, I'm also committed to doing my best to continue to stay safe and to limit the spread of the virus; I urge you to do the same. Check out [these three reasons to keep masking](#), even if you've been vaccinated.

Please review the following updates:

Per New York State, as of Feb. 15 individuals with certain [chronic conditions](#) are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. All vaccination centers and pharmacies in the Finger Lakes Region will NOT require a doctor's note to confirm eligibility; you will sign a form when you go for your vaccine. Similarly, if you are eligible because you provide in-person instruction you will need to sign an attestation of your eligibility and show your University ID at your vaccine appointment; you do not need a note from your department chair.

We encourage everyone, including students, to visit [flvaccinehub.com](#) or the State's vaccine [website](#) to see if you are eligible and to find a list of vaccine providers. More mass-vaccination sites are opening statewide, including a site on St. Paul Street at the former Kodak Hawkeye site.

Please be sure to check out the following newsletters for regular vaccine updates (and other useful information):

- [URMC This Week](#) (comes out every Wednesday)
- faculty@urmc (comes out Tuesday/Thursday)
- [@Rochester](#) (daily)

- You can browse and subscribe to other URMC newsletters on the Newsletters@URMC intranet page.

Thanks and stay safe.

Steve Dewhurst, PhD

Vice Dean for Research

If you have any concerns about safety compliance or other issues related to work, please email research_covid_concerns@urmc.rochester.edu.