

Vaccination in the time of Covid-19: An Update!

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Never has a new year been so warmly welcomed by so many – at least not in my lifetime. The end of 2020 saw the first light at the end of the proverbial pandemic tunnel with the provision of the first emergency use authorization for a SARS-COV-2 vaccine issued by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Indeed, despite SARS-COV-2 being the seventh of its family to emerge and produce pathology in humans, it is not most lethal, or second-most lethal. 2020's FDA action is the first for a vaccine against a human coronavirus. Yet, the light shone very brightly in the pandemic winter!

As is customary in the US, efforts to protect the populace from a public health emergency were federally-guided and state-executed. Thus, the Centers for Disease Control provided the priority group guidelines, or framework, and the minimum requirements for distribution planning. States then developed operational plans and are executing them. Some states leveraged existing relationships with the medical providers for whom they offer privilege of practice via state licensing for effective administration of vaccine. The distribution of actual vaccine was performed and overseen by the federal authorities and via private sector partners, given the extreme requirements for stability of the initially available vaccine. It is reasonable that the same medical providers on whom each of us depend would prove adequate to vaccinate all of us. Yet, hiccups have arisen.

Some states defined the priority tier populations differently than others, some more restrictive and some more inclusive. Reportedly, some state actors prioritized guideline adherence over practical usage of a scarce product. Further complicating is the very medical personnel deemed most critical and highest priority for vaccination declined vaccination based on personal risk/benefit evaluations. Covid-19 is not the first pandemic where the federal leadership has filled its current role while states performed their operational duties.

The good news, for those who want to enter a priority lane, is that multiple vaccine candidates are now entering distribution. These subsequent products are less reliant on extreme environmental controls and should make for smoother distribution channels from all levels.

The virus itself continues to simply survive through evolution of what appears to be limited to more efficient transmission among its new host. As we move into the real meat of this new year the only thing that stays the same is that change persists. Again, I reiterate my earlier conclusion: At least no one is offering anyone a puss-soaked cotton ball to place intranasally for a few days. So, it could be worse.

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