



"Serve the needs of our physician members so they can better serve the needs of the community"

Highlights from the Florida Medical Association's COVID Vaccine Discussion with Dr. Rivkees

On Friday, December 11, the Florida Medical Association (FMA) hosted a members-only call with Dr. Scott Rivkees, Florida's Surgeon General. Here are a few of the highlights of the meeting (courtesy of Duval County Medical Society).

Dr. Rivkees asked for patience as the first five hospitals are really just a trial run with the Pfizer vaccine to make sure they have the processes in place to deliver, store, and distribute the vaccine. He said many more hospitals will start to receive vaccine as soon as one week after the initial allocation. Dr. Rivkees also mentioned the Moderna vaccine will be part of that second delivery of vaccine (once approved).

He said he is in discussions with the Florida Hospital Association to create a plan for vaccinating community physicians following the same Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) guidelines for High Risk Providers. He wanted to make it clear they are not disregarding the importance of community physicians and are discussing how to get the vaccine to those physicians not affiliated with hospitals.

It is clear, though, that the Florida Department of Health (DOH) will most likely funnel community physicians to the local hospitals for vaccine rather than using pharmacies or trying to administer through the DOH centers.

They are directing the hospitals to follow the ACIP guidelines for what clinicians are deemed high risk and he frequently mentioned what we have all been thinking: over 65, those in ICUs, Emergency Departments, actively exposed to treating COVID patients, and those testing for COVID. That is the guidance they continue to give the hospital administrations and hospitals will be prioritizing their staff based on those guidelines.

The other focus of phase one is nursing homes. Walgreens and CVS will be going to those facilities to deliver vaccine.

As more supplies become available, the State and Federal plans would call for vaccinations to then move to the general population and again focus on high-risk patients - over 65. Physicians are encouraged to [sign up](#) to provide vaccine for their patients but availability for physicians to offer to their patients is anticipated to be much later in the roll out.

The Governor's Office and DOH really appear to be sticking to the Federal and State published plans for the vaccine roll out with only slight variations. It seems like the focus on nursing homes is a little more of a priority in Florida.

The only controversy we have heard to date is how high-risk community physicians not attached to hospitals will secure their vaccine. The plan from DOH is for the hospitals to make that available. However, there is no guidance yet on how or when that may be available.

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