

Terra Nova Times

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Terra Nova High School

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Vaccination efforts well underway



Local health care workers, including Pacifica resident Dr. Ingrid Lim (top right), Jefferson High School Principal Kesha Emmendorfer's mom (second from top left), and JUHSD board member Andy Lie's wife Page (second row, second from left), get their first doses of a COVID-19 vaccine.

By Sophie Phelps
Times staff writer

COVID-19 has been one of the most rapidly spreading diseases that we have faced in the modern world, but the tools to fight it have been developed in record time, with the production of a vaccine in a time frame that has never been seen before. The COVID-19 vaccine was created in less than a year, setting the record for fastest developed vaccine. On Dec. 11, the FDA and CDC authorized the emergency use of a COVID-19 vaccine developed by Pfizer-BioNTech, with a second vaccine produced by Moderna

approved soon thereafter. These authorizations allowed the United States to join Canada and the United Kingdom in the list of countries to approve the vaccine.

There is still extensive testing being done throughout the world on COVID-19 vaccines, and it is estimated that Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna have pre-sold approximately six to ten percent of the total doses being manufactured.

The United States is currently distributing the vaccine to those who are at the highest risk first, and then will progressively reach those who are least likely to get COVID-19. The first phase will be done in three rounds with the first round going to critical health care workers and

long term care facility residents and employees. Vaccinations got off to a fairly slow start due to the incredible logistics involved in the transportation, storage, and distribution of the vaccine, but local health care workers began receiving their first shot just a week after FDA approval.

Stephanie Hamilton, a registered nurse at Mills-Peninsula Hospital in Burlingame, was one of the lucky ones who received the vaccine last month.

"The Emergency Department, Intensive Care, Step-down Intensive Care and the Covid Medical area were offered vaccines... I got my first vaccine on Dec. 19 and my second will be Jan. 9," she said.

Hamilton had no hesitation when it

came to getting her shot. "I'm excited for the vaccine. I think it is THE way we will get out of this mess... Working with this [disease] everyday, I can honestly say you don't want [COVID-19], you don't want to be my patient and you DO want the vaccine."

Most medical professionals agree that the distribution of the vaccine thus far has been slow and hope for a more aggressive plan in the future.

Amanda Olson, a speech pathologist who works with critically ill adults, said, "I feel like no one is taking responsibility for the rollout, we have millions

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Vaccine

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of doses just sitting there that should be given to someone.” However, despite the inefficiencies, Olson was one of the lucky ones, getting her first shot last month. She encourages others to take the vaccine seriously.

“Most of my colleagues accepted the vaccine ... I had way more concern about the long term effects of COVID that we are seeing, than any possible side effects of the vaccine.”

Rebecca Belway, a physician assistant who works in the surgical field at SCL Health in Colorado, described her experience when she got vaccinated last month.

“Every provider had an online chart... They gave us times and dates, and we could get vaccinated at any one of the six or seven locations within the system,” she said. In order to be effective, the vaccine requires two doses, three weeks apart. Because the two vaccines currently available require ultracold storage, distribution is complicated.



“My understanding in Colorado is there are only two facilities that are able to store the vaccine within the temperature requirements (-80C to -60C) and then based on how many people sign up for the vaccines within a 3-5 day time period they will remove those vaccines from

subzero freezers and ship them out to facilities,” Belway said.

Once all of the members of Phase 1a have received their shots, California will begin Phase 1b, which includes essential workers who work in education, food and agriculture, police officers, and firefighters, as well as people over the age of 75. The final round in phase one will go to people who have underlying health conditions and are over the age of

sixty five. Phase two and three will then go to the general public and will be based on the health, age, and circumstances.

Though there are concerns about the vaccine’s side effects, there is more research being currently conducted, and there is enough current information to show that the vaccine is not dangerous or risky to take.

Ingrid Lim, an emergency physician at Kaiser San Francisco, received the vaccine a couple of weeks ago and only suffered from a sore arm for two days, mild fatigue, and a headache. Lim does state that there could be more intense side effects after getting the second dose of the vaccine. “I have heard that side effects might be a bit more (more intense immunological response) with the second dose ... but I will gladly take any of those transient side effects for the protection against this deadly virus.”

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