

UT Southwestern Medical Center

Update on COVID-19 Vaccine Availability and Distribution

December 9, 2020

To the UT Southwestern community:

In a week that may prove a watershed in the course of the pandemic, I am writing to share our ongoing efforts on campus to prepare for the possibility of one or more vaccines being approved for emergency use authorization. I know you are following these developments in earnest, and I want to make certain that we effectively address your questions so that you are positioned to make the most informed decisions moving forward. Here at UT Southwestern, rigorous work is underway to ensure the vaccines are not only safe, but distributions are equitable, effective, and efficient. There are three important dimensions to that work.

First, a multidisciplinary team – composed of immunologists, infectious diseases experts, epidemiologists, ethicists, and other key stakeholders – convened several weeks ago to consider our approach to the prioritization of the vaccine when initial supplies are limited. Our policies and allocation strategies have been informed by advisories from national organizations, including the National Academy of Medicine (NAM), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Recommendations from the Expert Vaccine Allocation Panel (EVAP), which were approved by the commissioner of the Texas Department of State Health Services, have also been reviewed. Like the state and national organizations, the UTSW workgroup is prioritizing early vaccination of health care workers and other employees in direct contact with COVID-19 patients or infectious particles, as well as first responders, and those who play pivotal roles in supporting their activities and operations. We are committed to ensuring equitable distribution for the greatest benefit so that we may continue providing the very best care for our patients and protect the health and safety of each other.

Second, we established a Vaccine Science Review Committee to independently review clinical trial data of the vaccine candidates. We are confident in the evaluation by the FDA, but we also feel an obligation to carefully review the findings to better guide recommendations to the campus community and our patients, as we prepare to deploy the vaccine.

Third, a team of our Health System colleagues has been focused on ensuring operational readiness for rapid and efficient deployment of the vaccine. Should the FDA authorize emergency use of the vaccine – and our scientific workgroup endorse it – we are prepared to administer the vaccine almost immediately, upon receipt of our first shipment and guided by our prioritization principles. If all that

happens, I strongly urge the members of our UT Southwestern community to take advantage of access to the vaccine as it becomes available to you. However, to be clear, the decision to receive the vaccine is an individual one and not required by UT Southwestern.

Further details will be forthcoming as events unfold in the days and weeks ahead. We will use MyChart to notify you when vaccines become available based on your UT Southwestern eligibility. Initial vaccination, as well as a second injection 21 days later, will be done by appointment scheduled through MyChart. For those who do not currently use MyChart, guidance will be provided on how that can be done.

I want to thank the many members of our UT Southwestern workgroups, as well as key contributors across our Health System, for their meticulous preparation that will enable us to effectively distribute the vaccine within days of its approval.

We recognize that there are many questions about access to vaccinations among our patients, as well as our own faculty, staff, trainees, and students. Please email your questions to covid-19questions@utsouthwestern.edu so that we may compile a list and provide timely answers. We will continue to provide new updates to our [COVID-19 webpage](#) as well.

Our commitment to your well-being and excellence in patient care remains as steadfast as always. We appreciate your continued efforts and vigilance as we approach a hopeful new milestone in this pandemic.

Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D.
President, UT Southwestern Medical Center