

President-Elect Dr. Steve Murphey gave us a fine update Wednesday on the ever-changing Covid-19 vaccine situation. Under his guidance we are initiating regular updates, at least on a weekly basis, as a service to our members and to the general public.

Major developments in the fight against Covid-19, which already has claimed the lives of more than 460,000 Americans (1,600 in Allegheny County alone), are taking place daily. Just yesterday, the day after Dr. Murphey's talk:

- Walmart Corporation announced that five **Sam's Club's** in the Pittsburgh area (including Pittsburgh Mills and Monroeville) – and nationwide – will soon become vaccination centers and will begin accepting appointments late next week for the current eligible **65-and-over population**.
- **Johnson & Johnson** sought Emergency Use Authorization of its single-shot vaccine that could be a game-changer in the fight against Covid-19. The J&J vaccine could be on the market by March 1.
- **Allegheny Health Network** is aggressively promoting its inoculation options FOR PATIENTS ALREADY ENROLLED IN THE AHN SYSTEM. [AHN | Allegheny Health Network](#). (UPMC is restricting its inoculations to healthcare workers).
- The **Veterans Administration** is aggressively inoculating VETERANS ALREADY ENROLLED IN THE VA HEALTHCARE SYSTEM.

Meanwhile, as Dr. Murphey pointed out, the Covid-19 virus is mutating into more dangerous forms that can be stopped only by mass inoculations – and continued commonsense precautions such as mask-wearing and social distancing.

A link to a Zoom recording of our Feb. 3 Fox Chapel Rotary meeting, which includes Dr. Murphey's presentation, is at this site:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/p0ZI6tSQ-qMQQJzZsyLpSIYL4tvtrwvdJU6szdvU\\_h79UW5wSiV3UGztcIEN9mKA.1h\\_aKI3hoyLugMbz](https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/p0ZI6tSQ-qMQQJzZsyLpSIYL4tvtrwvdJU6szdvU_h79UW5wSiV3UGztcIEN9mKA.1h_aKI3hoyLugMbz)

Here are some highlights and updates:

- The two current approved vaccines, **Pfizer** and **Moderna**, have incredibly good efficacies but both require two inoculations, and both are in very short supply.
- Anyone 65-years of age or older in Pennsylvania is eligible to receive the vaccines BUT it's a mad scramble, requiring significant online computer skills – and patience – to make an appointment. Yes, you can make appointments in pharmacies in Ohio and West Virginia.
- You must be pro-active to get on a WAITING LIST or make an appointment ON-LINE at any of the hundreds of pharmacies in the county and state that are dispensing the vaccines. It may be months before there is enough vaccine for even this initial population group of 65-and-over.
- For **Veterans already enrolled in the VA Healthcare system**, the VA Hospital in Oakland is offering an all-day WALK-IN Inoculation clinics on selected Saturdays for veterans 65 and older. If you are not enrolled in the VA Healthcare system, you need to enroll and be seen first at one of the area hospitals. To start the process you may call 412-822-3000 (Option 5) or register with your discharge papers and driver's license at the nearest VA Hospital. The H.J. Heinz Hospital in Fox Chapel is open 8-4 M-F at 1010 Delafield Road, Pittsburgh, PA

15240. (Phone: [412-360-6000](tel:412-360-6000). Or go to: [VA Pittsburgh Health Care | H. John Heinz III Department of Veterans A](#)

- **Rite-Aid** is the most aggressive of the large pharmacies currently dispensing the vaccines. Many of the largest pharmacies – such as at Giant Eagle – do NOT have the vaccine. The major problem with the **Rite-Aid site** is that you have to fill out the one-page application, click on a store location, only to me told that yes, you qualify, but that location isn't taking applications at this time. Then you have to start all over again to fill out the application. Here's the site:

<https://www.riteaid.com/pharmacy/covid-qualifier>

- Many of the pharmacies on the official **Pa.gov website** that are currently scheduling inoculations are small, single-store operations. **Towne Drugs in Aspinwall**, for example, was creating a waiting list last week but that has been filled. You probably will have to go on the **PA.Gov Map** in the link below and find a small pharmacy in a rural area outside of Allegheny County, up to an hour away, that still is accepting applications. (Nearly all the Rite-Aid stores – including the store in Fox Chapel Plaza -- are not taking applications at this time). Here's the Pa.Gov site:

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Vaccine/Pages/Vaccine.aspx>

- **Walmart** will begin making ONLINE appointments next week for its **Sam's Club** locations at Pittsburgh Mills (15084), Monroeville (15146), West Mifflin (15122), Hempfield (15601) and Trinity Point (15301) in Washington, PA, once it is notified that the vaccines are on their way. (No need to try to sign up in advance as the site will not accept applications.) We do not believe that you need to be a Sam's Club member to schedule the inoculations at a Sam's Club store but you need to type in those Zip Codes. Here are the websites: [walmart.com/COVIDvaccine](http://walmart.com/COVIDvaccine) and [samsclub.com/covid](http://samsclub.com/covid).
- UPMC is not dispensing any vaccine to the general public at this time, focusing first on healthcare workers.