

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Marks Historic Beginning of New Jersey's COVID-19 Vaccination Effort at University Hospital's Vaccine Clinic at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School

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COVID-19 Vaccinations for Health Care Personnel to Begin in Hospitals Across New Jersey

NEWARK – Governor Phil Murphy, joined by Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli, University Hospital President and CEO Dr. Shereef Elnahal, and Rutgers New Jersey Medical School Dean Dr. Robert Johnson, today visited University Hospital's Vaccine Clinic at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School to mark the historic beginning of New Jersey's vaccination effort and witness the administration of the first COVID-19 vaccinations to the state's frontline health care workers.

"This is a day that we have been waiting nearly a year for, and while we know this isn't the end, we are witnessing, at the least, a glimmer of hope at the end of the tunnel," **said Governor Murphy**. "Without question, we are still in for several hard months and we are going to face stiff headwinds from this second wave, but now our heroic frontline health care workers can begin to take care of their fellow New Jerseyans with a higher degree of confidence in their own protection."

"Availability of a COVID-19 vaccine within the same year as the epidemic began is a huge scientific achievement, which can help us contain this virus and save lives," **said New Jersey Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli**. "We are thankful for our hospitals—who serve communities around the state—for volunteering to provide equitable and efficient access to vaccines to our valued healthcare workforce."

"My experience during the COVID-19 pandemic has been that of so many of my healthcare peers, and during the first wave, we faced an unprecedented volume of critically ill patients from all walks of life and adult populations," **said Maritza Beniquez, Resident Nurse, Emergency Department, University Hospital and the first COVID-19 vaccine recipient in New Jersey**. "As a woman of color, I stand in solidarity with my community and know that we are three times more likely to suffer the catastrophic effects of this disease. Although I am living proof that PPE functions and has kept me safe while at work, I'm honored to be the first person in New Jersey to receive this vaccine, which will limit the possibility of me contracting this disease and unknowingly transmitting it to others."

The federal government has allocated 76,050 first doses to New Jersey for the first tranche of the Pfizer-BioNTech (ultra-cold chain) vaccine, which began arriving at acute care hospitals Monday morning. New Jersey will roll out COVID-19 vaccines step-by-step to serve all adults who live, work, or are being educated in the state. Phasing will ensure that limited vaccines are distributed in a fair and equitable manner. Phase 1A of the plan, which captures approximately 650,000 people, includes healthcare workers who are paid and unpaid persons serving in healthcare settings who have the potential for direct or indirect exposure to patients or infectious materials. Acute care hospital workers at highest risk of exposure to COVID-19 will be the first to receive the vaccine.

The Department of Health issued guidance

(https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/3jyo0d/nrddit/7a67um_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!dA20G50ZJDbPRwLqbs5huTPt1qaEHHJaJtygkvrNfkWu2BsXCX) the all acute care hospitals last week to help prepare for vaccine deployment.

Six acute care hospitals across the state—AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center, Cooper University Hospital, Hackensack University Medical Center, Morristown Medical Center, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital and University Hospital— are receiving doses this week of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. By the end of the week, vaccines should be available at an additional 47 acute care hospitals that can manage the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, which requires ultra-cold chain storage. While acute care hospitals will be the only points of dispensing during the first week of vaccine availability, the network will expand to additional sites like Federally Qualified Health Centers, local health departments, county sites, urgent care clinics, and pharmacies in December, pending vaccine availability.

"University Hospital has had a central role in battling the COVID-19 virus both in Newark and throughout the Garden State. With an effective vaccine now available, the hospital will continue its leadership in this pandemic, by first vaccinating our frontline healthcare heroes through Operation Warp Speed," **said Shereef Elnahal, MD, MBA, President and CEO of University Hospital**. "We know that our health care workers' adoption of this vaccine will be key to convince community members to vaccinate later. Our health care heroes have been, and continue to be, trusted voices for health care in our community, and we hope that they will carry the message that these vaccines are safe and effective. Widespread vaccination is the most effective step to helping life return to a new normal, and we applaud those members of our workforce for being the first to roll up their sleeves."

This vaccination is one of the most important steps we can take to protect us from the devastations of the COVID-19 virus," **said Dr. Robert Johnson, Dean of the Rutgers New Jersey Medical School**. "At this historic time, Rutgers New Jersey Medical School and University Hospital are once again united to fight to reduce the spread of covid-19. I'm confident that by working together we can significantly reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our communities."

"Throughout the pandemic, our team has continued to focus on keeping our patients, staff and community safe," **said Lori Herndon, RN, BSN, MBA, president and CEO, AtlantiCare**. "Getting vaccinated is an important step in ending the far-reaching impacts of COVID-19 we've experienced. As leaders within our healthcare community, our team is proud to begin administering and receiving the vaccine. I am grateful for their unwavering dedication and commitment, for the collaboration with our colleagues and partners across the state, and for all those who entrust us with their care."

"For the last 10 months, our team at Atlantic Health System has joined patients, caregivers and communities across the globe in rallying to overcome this virus. Now that we find ourselves on the verge of delivering a safe and effective vaccine, we see the light at the end of the tunnel," **said Brian Gragnolati, President & CEO, Atlantic Health System**. "Yet, until there is a large enough supply of vaccine to protect everyone, we must continue to follow the guidance we know works: frequent hand washing, masking and responsible social distancing."

"Despite the challenge of fighting an historic deadly pandemic, we should all take a moment to be grateful that we are living at a time when we can avail ourselves of tremendous health care from remarkable medical professionals and a breakthrough vaccine from dedicated researchers to potentially put an end to COVID-19 in record time," **said Kevin O'Dowd, Co-CEO of Cooper University Health Care**.

"We celebrate this astonishing achievement of developing a safe and effective vaccine in record time," **said Robert C. Garrett, CEO of Hackensack Meridian Health**. "We are excited to be part of history as we start the process of vaccinating the people of New Jersey. It's imperative that we remain vigilant in our fight against this global enemy and on behalf of families, our communities and our healthcare heroes."

"Throughout the pandemic, New Jersey's health care providers together continue to help patients fight for their lives. At RWJBarnabas Health, our frontline workers have selflessly and tirelessly been caring for the communities we serve," **said Barry H. Ostrowsky, President and Chief Executive Officer of RWJBarnabas Health**. "We're profoundly grateful to be able to offer our healthcare heroes this vaccine, which will keep them safe and protect their families and their patients."



Phase 1A will also include long-term care residents, who are adults who live in facilities that provide a range of services, including medical and personal care, to persons who are unable to live independently. Long-term care facilities will be served on-site through a pharmacy partnership supported by the CDC.

In advance of administration of the first doses in New Jersey, the New Jersey Department of Health's COVID-19 Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) reviewed the Food and Drug Administration's emergency use authorization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's usage guidance for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine. The PAC includes New Jersey-specific experts representing both geographic and professional diversity. The current membership includes state officials, epidemiology and immunization experts, public health professionals, health systems and health practitioners, local health champions, infectious and chronic disease providers, ethics and legal experts, equity and inclusion leaders, academics, and health quality advisors.

Biographies and headshots for the recipients can be found here (/governor/news/news/562020/docs/UH_Vaccine_Recipients_Bios_and_Photos.docx).

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