

THE CLAREMONT COLLEGES

CORONAVIRUS MEDIA RECAP - SPECIAL UPDATE

Monday, November 9, 2020

Today there was a significant announcement regarding the progress of the COVID vaccine. The following is a summary of key points from various media outlets.

- Pfizer announced today that an early analysis of its coronavirus vaccine trial suggested the vaccine was 90 percent effective in preventing the disease among trial volunteers who had no evidence of prior coronavirus infection. If the results hold up, that level of protection would put it on par with highly effective childhood vaccines for diseases such as measles. No serious safety concerns have been observed.
- Pfizer plans to ask the Food and Drug Administration for emergency authorization of the two-dose vaccine later this month, after it has collected the recommended two months of safety data. By the end of the year it will have manufactured enough doses to immunize 15 to 20 million people. The U.S. population is 331 million. Selected individuals would get an initial shot and a booster three weeks later.
- If the final vaccine ends up with the level of efficacy noted, it “would be higher than your regular flu vaccine, and this vaccine could have a serious impact on bending the curve of the outbreak.”
- The trial is expected to continue until 164 people in the 44,000 person trial have developed Covid-19 and will also evaluate how well it protects against developing severe forms of the disease, and how well the vaccine protects people who have already been infected with the coronavirus. Given the recent spread, Pfizer does not expect it to take long to arrive at the 164 cases.
- Half of the participants received two doses of the vaccine, and half received a placebo. The first analysis was based on 94 volunteers who developed Covid-19.
- Governor Newsom noted in today’s press conference, that mass distribution continues to be a ways off – likely well into 2021, noting probably April at the earliest.
- The governor reiterated details about California's COVID-19 vaccination plan, with health care workers and first responders being prioritized in the first phases of vaccines.
- Newsom noted that Pfizer would only have a limited number of doses potentially available in December. You need two doses, and California is expected to only receive around 12% of the available vaccines — which won't be enough to cover the state's health care workers (estimated to be about 1.5 – 2 million workers).
- The next group of those prioritized will be those in high-risk groups. The state's scientific safety review workgroup will be closely monitoring vaccine trials. There is also a drafting guidelines workgroup that's working to determine guidelines for prioritization and allocation of vaccine supplies.
- Dr. Anthony Fauci, said the results suggesting 90% effectiveness were “just extraordinary,” adding: “Not very many people expected it would be as high as that.” “It’s going to have a major impact on everything we do with respect to COVID,” Fauci said. Earlier this year, Fauci said he would be happy with a vaccine that was 60% effective.
- The current results do not indicate whether older people will get strong protection from the vaccine. Pfizer’s clinical trial includes people over age 65, so it will eventually provide this crucial information. Early clinical studies have suggested that older people produce a weaker immune response to coronavirus vaccines.

- Another open question is whether children will get protection from the vaccine. The trial run by Pfizer initially was open to people 18 or older, but in September they began including teenagers as young as 16. Last month, they launched a new trial on children as young as 12 and plan to work their way to younger ages.
- Pfizer did not accept federal funding to help develop or manufacture the vaccine.
- There are [10 other vaccines](#) now in late-stage trials across the globe. The fact that Pfizer and BioNTech have gotten encouraging results is making experts optimistic about the entire field.