With vaccines around corner, don’t give in to COVID-19 fatigue

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What’s the news: The makers of two COVID-19 vaccine candidates have already applied for emergency use authorization from the Food and Drug Administration and issued news releases touting promising efficacy results.

Now the AMA is joined by the leading organizations representing U.S. nurses and hospitals in an open letter to the American public that affirms their commitment to ensuring COVID-19 vaccines are evaluated and ultimately authorized through a rigorous scientific and regulatory process.

The AMA, American Hospital Association (AHA) and American Nurses Association (ANA) called on the American people to continue public health precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 until the U.S. population has been broadly immunized against the illness.

Read about new AMA ethics guidance on physicians’ duty to get vaccinated during a pandemic.

Why it’s important: A September Pew Charitable Trusts poll found that only 51% of U.S. adults would “probably” or “definitely” get a COVID-19 vaccine if it were available, compared with 49% who said they would not. That represents a big drop from a Pew poll in May that found 72% of American adults would get vaccinated to protect themselves from SARS-CoV-2, the new coronavirus that causes COVID-19.

“As we approach the point when a vaccine may be available, more than 260,000 Americans and more than 1.4 million people worldwide have lost their lives to COVID-19, we know that vaccines will save lives and help us turn the page on this virus,” say the open letter from the AMA, ANA and AHA. “Vaccines have eradicated smallpox, nearly eliminated chickenpox and polio, and minimized the impact of countless other diseases. To achieve a similar result from COVID-19 vaccines requires trust in the process to develop, distribute and administer a safe and effective vaccine and broad willingness to get vaccinated.”

The organizations said they are “committed to supporting the rigorous scientific and regulatory
process by which COVID-19 vaccines are evaluated and may ultimately be authorized and recommended for use in the population.”

They also voiced commitment “to establishing safe and effective processes for administering vaccine to all who are eligible and choose to get vaccinated.”

Transparency also is critical.

“We will make critical information about vaccines available as it is released, working together to share plans for vaccinating communities across this country,” says the open letter. “We will share the benefits and risks of a vaccine so that you can make an informed decision for yourself and your loved ones.”

In the meantime, physicians, nurses and hospitals will continue urging Americans to protect themselves “by taking three critical, scientifically-proven steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19: wear a face mask, maintain physical distancing, and wash your hands.”

Find out why the effort to restore trust in science must begin now.

**Learn more:** The “COVID-19: What Physicians Need to Know” webinar series is hosted by AMA physician leaders, and each installment offers fact-based insights from the nation’s highest-ranking subject-matter experts working to protect the health of the public during the COVID-19 pandemic.