

# Physicians provide key voice in building vaccine confidence

FEB 25, 2021

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Even as our nation surpasses the grim milestone of 500,000 lives lost to COVID-19, expanded shipments of COVID-19 vaccines are making their way to more locations nationwide. Physicians can expect to field more vaccine-related questions from patients about safety, effectiveness and related issues.

And this is a good thing, because it reinforces the key role physicians play as the source of information and guidance that patients trust above all others. Our role as “vaccine ambassadors,” and the recommendations we routinely share with our patients on this and other aspects of their health, are critical in boosting their acceptance and ensuring their well-being.

Our patients bring a wide range of life experiences, viewpoints and mindsets to their interactions with us, and their questions and concerns can vary widely as a result. Black, Latino and Indigenous patients deserve thoughtful and culturally relevant messaging to overcome longstanding (and well-founded) distrust in the medical system. The “Trustworthiness & Vaccines” installment in our AMA’s “Prioritizing Equity” video series is a great place to learn about these cultural concerns.

To further advance the mission of vaccine education and boost patient confidence, our AMA is partnering with the Ad Council and the COVID Collaborative today to launch “It’s Up to You,” one of the largest and most comprehensive public health information efforts ever undertaken.

Created in cooperation with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), this campaign helps people make sense of the available scientific information about the vaccines so they can make informed decisions about vaccination for themselves and their families. All the details can be found at [GetVaccineAnswers.org](https://www.getvaccineanswers.org) (or in Spanish at [DeTiDepende.org](https://www.detidedepende.org)).

Our AMA supports the principles for equitable allocation outlined by CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), which have become guidelines for state and local officials. These

principles are fully aligned with the fundamental values of medicine and the ethical responsibilities of physicians as defined in the *AMA Code of Medical Ethics*, and directly address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on people of color through increased exposure, illness and mortality.

## Why doctors have confidence

The two mRNA vaccines now being administered are the result of research that has been underway for decades, and both have been studied rigorously in large randomized controlled trials across varied populations. Our confidence in the safety and efficacy of these vaccines is bolstered by the rigorous, evidence-based and wholly transparent vaccine authorization and recommendation for use process followed by both the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the CDC.

That same process involved recommendations from external advisory groups serving both agencies, including ACIP. Our AMA recognizes ACIP recommendations as the standard physicians should follow in making decisions about vaccines with patients. Also, members of the FDA's Vaccine and Regulated Biological Products Advisory Committee carefully evaluated the safety and effectiveness data submitted by the vaccine manufacturers before the final decision on emergency use authorization was made solely by the FDA.

## Getting vaccines to doctors' offices

Although the vaccine deliveries are increasing and newly opened vaccination sites are accepting more appointments and patients nationwide, it remains painfully clear that demand will continue to outstrip supply as winter gives way to spring. As the number of doses increases in the weeks ahead, it is critical that physician practices receive an adequate supply—which has not been the case to date. The direct and open conversations we share with our patients, and the trust that is at the heart of the patient-physician relationship, will help boost vaccine confidence.

Patients who have questions or doubts should be encouraged to discuss them with a physician, nurse or other health care professional. Frontline caregivers and others who have received vaccinations should eagerly share their experiences with others. Our AMA's COVID-19 resource center and our COVID-19 vaccine guide for physicians offer tips and advice on answering patients' questions, along with a wealth of other valuable information.

The monumental public health effort now underway to provide a vaccine to everyone able to receive it needs all the support we can render to end the scourge of COVID-19. Our AMA will remain your powerful ally in this and every other effort to improve the health of our nation.