

February 18, 2021

Bechara Choucair, MD  
Vaccinations Coordinator  
White House COVID-19 Response Team  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Dr. Choucair:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), we thank the Biden Administration for their immediate focus on improving and accelerating distribution of COVID-19 vaccines nationwide. Thank you for including the AMA's President, Susan Bailey, MD, in discussions about vaccinations this week. I understand that Dr. Bailey shared with you that, while we are encouraged to see rapid improvement in the number of individuals vaccinated each day, we are concerned that the Administration is not utilizing all potential avenues to get these life-saving vaccinations into the arms of patients. Specifically, physician offices have not been included as part of the national vaccination distribution strategy and have likewise been excluded from distribution plans in many states. **As vaccine supply increases over the coming weeks and months, we strongly urge the Administration to reconsider its current distribution strategy to ensure physician offices can participate in vaccine administration and to encourage states to include these sites of care in their distribution plans.**

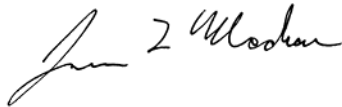
When searching for information regarding vaccinations or when looking to receive a vaccine, the most common place for a patient to turn is to their physician, making physicians uniquely situated to assist in promoting COVID-19 vaccination. However, the current structure for COVID-19 vaccine distribution has left physicians with little to offer patients other than to check with their state or local health department or pharmacies, which can be a challenging process for many patients to navigate. Complicated internet-based appointment scheduling systems have been difficult for even the savviest of patients. For less technology-savvy elderly patients or those without access to broadband internet or smartphones with cellular data access, they have been nearly impossible. Including physician offices in the distribution strategy for COVID-19 would alleviate a significant number of the challenges certain populations are facing with accessing COVID-19 vaccines, as calling a physician office to secure a vaccine appointment may be a much easier option for populations struggling to secure appointments on internet-based systems. Further, due to existing relationships physicians can quickly and easily identify patients with co-morbidities that pose the highest risk for severe COVID-19. Physician offices are also able to offer ease of scheduling, and can provide vulnerable patients, even those that may not regularly see a physician, an environment that may be easier to access and in which they feel more comfortable and safer receiving the vaccine.

Additionally, the exclusion of physician offices from COVID-19 vaccine distribution plans represents a significant missed opportunity to increase the vaccination rate among the nation's traditionally underserved populations. For many Americans, care sites such as hospitals and community health centers may be some distance from where they live. Rural areas are particularly impacted by this issue and are likewise not targets for mass vaccination events. In these instances, physician offices may be more easily accessible and the best available option for COVID-19 vaccine administration.

Physicians will also serve a key role in addressing vaccine hesitancy among many Americans. While current demand for the COVID-19 vaccine is overwhelmingly high, we expect that at some point it will wane and what remains will be a significant portion of the population unvaccinated and with varying levels of vaccine confidence. For those nervous about receiving the vaccine, it is unlikely that they will be persuaded to go to the pharmacy, hospital, or vaccination event by federal, state, and local messaging alone. However, physicians have a tremendous opportunity to discuss the risks and benefits of vaccination with these same patients during in-office visits. Should physicians not be able to offer these patients the vaccine at the time of this discussion, it may result in those patients continuing to go unvaccinated.

As you continue to engage in this unprecedented national vaccination effort, **the AMA strongly urges you to include physician offices in your distribution strategies, while encouraging states to do the same.** As we rapidly approach half a million American lives lost from COVID-19, we cannot afford to miss any opportunity to provide a potentially life-saving vaccination to any patient and we must ensure we make getting vaccinated as accessible as possible for our most vulnerable patients. We must also do everything we can to help those hesitant about receiving this vaccine feel comfortable in making the choice to get vaccinated. In those instances, physicians are absolutely the best situated to build confidence and ensure that we not miss critical opportunities to ensure patients are vaccinated. We look forward to working with you on how to best include physician offices in vaccine distribution and administration strategies. Please do not hesitate to reach out to Shannon Curtis, Assistant Director of Federal Affairs at [shannon.curtis@ama-assn.org](mailto:shannon.curtis@ama-assn.org) to further discuss how physicians may best assist you in these critical, life-saving efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jim L Madara".

James L. Madara, MD