

Updates from the Medical Director/CEO

Update 01/20/21

Dear Members of the Austen Riggs Community:

I am pleased to share with you the good news that, under the distribution plan authorized by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Riggs patients and staff who elected to receive the first round of the COVID-19 vaccination began doing so on January 16 at a local vaccination site. Riggs staff and patients were eligible under the Massachusetts guidelines that identify congregate living facilities like Riggs as part of Phase 1 of vaccine distribution.

On January 16, 52 of 61 patients and 119 of 145 staff received the Moderna vaccine, representing approximately 85 and 82 percent of those respective groups. We have also made arrangements for those who were unable to attend last Saturday's clinic to receive vaccinations this week. Participation in the initiative is voluntary.

I am further pleased to share with you that we received no reports of significant adverse reactions to the injections. In anticipation of receiving access to vaccine, we offered educational webinars about the safety and efficacy of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines to staff and patients. I invite you to view this presentation by Heather Forouhar Graff, MD, who serves as the Center's Infection Control Physician: <https://www.austenriggs.org/resource/covid-19-vaccine-seminar>.

With the first round successfully concluded, we anticipate working with our patients and staff to schedule the second and final set of inoculations in February.

In each of my updates to you, I've expressed gratitude for the work that our patients and staff have done to keep Riggs free of cases of COVID-19 among us. To date, we have had no positive test results among the patients and only a handful among the staff, none of which led to spread to others at Riggs. I am now equally appreciative for the efforts of state health officials and the Riggs staff who worked together to make vaccinations a reality. With this action, we take another step toward passing from the winter of our discontent to more hopeful days ahead.

As always, my thanks for your support, and stay well.

Eric M. Plakun, MD
Medical Director/CEO