

## **From the desk of Commissioner Weinroth**

No doubt about it: The rollout of the COVID-19 vaccines has been a frustrating source of anxiety for everyone.

However, we must continue to remain patient as the Florida Department of Health and Healthcare District of Palm Beach County address the issues that have plagued process.

Unfortunately, the FDOH has advised it will likely take several months before all of our seniors can make appointments and get their vaccinations due to an imbalance between supply (not enough) and demand (growing by the day)! With 1.5 million county residents (including over 400,000 seniors) the logistical challenges of the rollout have been daunting.

Notwithstanding the issues we have been forced to confront, I am encouraged by positive developments.

President Biden has ordered federal agencies to tap the Defense Production Act to accelerate the production of vaccine and streamline the nationwide vaccination program.

The 67 Publix pharmacies in Palm Beach County have already begun giving shots, which will help to alleviate the long waits being experienced by many of our residents. Palm Beach County is by far the most populous county participating in the supermarket's vaccination program.

County staff is working closely with FDOH and the Health Care District to coordinate the strategies for equitable distribution of the vaccine in accordance with the Governor's priorities.

Once sufficient doses of the vaccine are available, county staff will support the state distribution efforts by establishing fixed

regionally located vaccination centers, Point of Distribution sites (PODS), clinical operations and pop-up community sites.

Progress is being made.

Palm Beach County has vaccinated a higher percentage of its seniors than Broward and Miami-Dade counties. Another bright note is our county's positivity rate, which had hovered at around 10 percent earlier. This month has dipped to 7.3 percent as of Jan. 21.

More than 150,000 people in Palm Beach County have been vaccinated. Statewide, more than 1 million Floridians have been vaccinated!

Admittedly, this is a "work in progress," but I urge you to take a moment to reflect on how successful we have been. The vaccine only received Emergency Use Authorization four weeks ago. It is unrealistic to expect 1.5 million county residents to be able to receive their vaccinations in a week or a month.

I'm an optimist.

I choose to recognize this is but a bump in the road. As adequate supplies of vaccine are received, a system for equitable distribution will materialize.

Remember: We are dealing with a global pandemic, unprecedented in the modern age. Help is coming, again, I ask for your continued patience.

Please remain vigilant while we continue to mitigate the virus' spread within our community.

And please adhere to the recommendations of the medical professionals:

- *Avoid the three Cs: crowded places, close-contact settings and confined/enclosed places*
- *Continue frequent handwashing*
- *Continue to wear facial coverings where social distancing is not possible.*

*Together, we will move past these challenges.*

## **Volunteer physicians needed**

Are you a retired doctor or a doctor with some extra time to spare?

The Palm Beach County Medical Society is working with the FDOH to support the distribution of vaccines through a network of volunteer physicians when the additional supplies of the vaccine becomes available.

Retired physicians or physicians willing to volunteer with the local vaccination rollout are asked to contact John James, the Society's director of Public Health and Disaster Services, at [johnj@pbcms.org](mailto:johnj@pbcms.org) or 772.284.2069.

Physicians are asked to complete a Medical Reserve Corps application and will need a recent background check to be eligible to volunteer.

## **Fraud Alert**

The COVID-19 vaccine is free to the public and only a \$15 administrative fee can be charged.

Unfortunately, demand for the vaccine has made it ripe for abuse by scam artists.

The FBI reports scammers purporting to sell the vaccine are trying to mislead people to give money and personal information such as social security numbers.

Our State Attorney, Dave Aronberg, notes That while there have been no reported cases in Palm Beach County, he is working closely with law enforcement to crack down on potential scams affecting local residents.

If you suspect COVID-19 health care fraud, call your local law enforcement agency.

Please stay safe! And as always, feel free to contact my office if you require assistance at [RWeinroth@pbcgov.org](mailto:RWeinroth@pbcgov.org) or 561.355.2204.