

November 2021

# CCM NEWSLETTER

Dr. Ima Tanner & Dr. Jorge Duchicela

## Giving Thanks for Science

It has been a while since third grade in elementary school. A time when we usually are introduced to the scientific method. In research of the highest quality this process is used to investigate, create, or prove certain assumptions. Modern medicine has borrowed this powerful tool to produce and use all sorts of medicines, diagnostic equipment, surgical procedures, preventive measures, and a myriad of treatment interventions ranging from psychiatric therapy to robotic manipulation of the human body.

As a family medicine physician and your primary doctor, I depend on what other scientists think and do.

My profession is about helping you live a long, fulfilling life. Those goals align perfectly with what you want and need.

To get the “net distillation” of a certain topic I go to reliable sources such as the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) or the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). If I need to understand the whats and whys of a medicine or a procedure then I read and study scientific journals and consult with specialists in the matter. I do this always with a respectful but very critical approach.

So today I give thanks to that seventeenth century European invention: The Scientific Method. Of course, I am also thankful to my third-grade teacher who taught me there is a way, a very effective way to understand and discover all those secrets of Nature.

I ask you to continue to be vigilant, curious and proactive in how you take care of your health!

Beware of so called “Research Studies”. I watch, hear and read ads on the media regarding medicines that cure the “common cold” AND they have “Scientists” to prove it. I would ask someone trustworthy before I spend a cent on these remedies, never mind putting them in my mouth, or injecting them in my body.

A direct product of the scientific method is the vaccine. But like any other intervention we need to be extremely cautious and vigilant in how we use the vaccines. The concept is the same but the details are very different.

---

## **The COVID-19 vaccine remains very effective in reducing severe disease, hospitalization and death.**

*Almost all severe COVID-19 cases are in unvaccinated patients.* However, we have recently seen that overall protection against mild to moderate disease is declining. This is most likely due to immunity wearing off and the rise of the Delta variant.

This brings us to the topic of COVID -19 boosters or extra doses.

**First-** there is a difference between a booster and an additional dose- in terms of immunity and in some cases with the dosage.

A “*booster dose*” is given to individuals who most likely had an adequate response to the first vaccine series, but immunity may have decreased slightly over time. A booster shot maximizes protection. *For the Moderna vaccine- the booster dose is less than the original 2 vaccine series. The Pfizer booster dose is the same as the original series dose.*

- It is given to anyone over 18 years old
- For the Moderna and Pfizer vaccine, it is given at least 6 months after the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose
- For the Johnson and Johnson (J&J), it is given at least 2 months after the 1<sup>st</sup> vaccine

An “*additional dose*” is not a booster since the patients getting this extra dose likely did NOT have an adequate immune response after their initial vaccine series.

- Given at least 28 days after the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose
- Recommended for moderately or severely immunocompromised patients (those on cancer treatments or on drugs that suppress the immune system - like Humira or high dose steroids)

**Second-** It’s okay to “mix and match” vaccines. This was approved on October 20th by the FDA. For example; if you got the Pfizer 2-dose vaccine, you can get the Moderna booster dose if that is the one that is available to you in your area. Public health officials approved this ‘mix and match’ approach to address the problems some people could run into when trying to get their booster/additional dose. The data is still coming in on which booster may be more beneficial given your first series vaccine. For now- get any approved booster that is available to you.

**Third-** Don’t base decisions about additional or booster doses on antibody tests. They are not designed to assess protection against COVID-19.

---

**Fourth-** Expect the side effects to be similar to that after the second dose.

*You may be asking- “What if I don’t want to get the booster/additional dose? Am I still considered fully vaccinated?”*

*The answer is YES- you are still considered fully vaccinated 2 weeks after the Pfizer or Moderna 2 dose vaccine or 2 weeks after the 1 dose J&J vaccine.*

***If you thought the talk of vaccines was over, think again. We are rolling into Flu Season my friends!***

We could be in for a rough flu season. Due to COVID precautions last year, we had a low number of flu cases. This means fewer people have less natural immunity, and may lead to increased flu severity this year. Yikes!

We are being asked to VACCINATE our patients NOW, especially if they haven’t already been vaccinated in October.

All flu vaccines this year will protect against 4 types of strains. The A strains have been updated and the B strains remain the same from last year. The CDC recommends a flu vaccine for everyone (with rare exceptions) over 6 months old. In general, they want the public to get vaccinated by whatever flu vaccine formulation is available to them. However, they do state a preference for older patients. Either Fludac or Fluzone High-Dose are the 2 recommended flu vaccines for individuals 65 years or older.

*You may be someone who thinks “I’m only getting one vaccine this year and it was the COVID one and now I’m done! Besides- the flu vaccine is only like 40-60% effective versus 90% effective for the COVID-19 vaccine!”*

**First,** I would applaud you for knowing so much about the efficacy of both types of vaccines.

**Second-** I bet you also knew that getting multiple vaccines in one day is not a problem... just ask little babies. They get multiple vaccines repeatedly during the first year and half of their lives. Your system can handle it.

**Third,** I would tell you that you’re comparing apples to oranges. The flu season is different every year and we are still learning about the COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness over time. I would also say that you are losing sight of the BIG PICTURE- *which is that BOTH the flu vaccine and the COVID vaccine significantly reduce the risk of severe illness, hospitalization and death.*

---

Please call the clinic today to schedule your vaccines and protect yourself this season.

Your Vaccine Record

	Yes	No
Flu 2021-2022	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
COVID 19	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Jorge Duchicela, M.D.*