

Frontline News

1199 MEMBERS ON THE FRONT LINES OF THE FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

VACCINATIONS SAVE LIVES. GET YOUR COVID-19 VACCINATION NOW!



Dr. Chris T. Pernell is Chief Strategic Integration and Health Equity Officer at University Hospital in Newark, NJ. Prior to joining University Hospital, Dr. Pernell led the 1199/League Labor Management Initiatives Workplace and Community Health Program.

Dear Sisters and Brothers, thank you for all you are doing on the front lines of healthcare. Your commitment to our patients and our communities is, and has always been, exemplary. In the face of this virus, and all the challenges to our healthcare system, you continue to be our most trusted voices and messengers moving through this pandemic and beyond it. Most of you know my story from our many conversations over the last few months. In case you don't, I lost my father and two cousins to COVID-19; my sister, a breast cancer survivor, survived the illness but struggles with a host of 'long-hauler' symptoms. Those experiences, plus my dedication to public health, make defeating COVID-19 very personal for me. I know it is for you, too. Black and Brown communities have been devastated by COVID-19. Among communities of color and the poor, the loss is almost incalculable. But we have a way back: COVID-19 vaccines and demanding health equity. These vaccines will save lives. I participated in the Moderna vaccine trial and I'm confident in the science and the process behind its development. I believe it is an effective weapon in the fight against COVID-19. But those weapons only work if we use them. I urge you to educate yourself and to make an informed decision. Talk to experts. Talk to your co-workers. And, hopefully, get vaccinated as soon as you can. It may save your life and the lives of those you love.

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Q: *How effective are the vaccines against the new coronavirus variants? If I am vaccinated now, will I have to get another shot to protect against those?*

A: The experts don't know yet. Scientists think the Moderna and BioNTech vaccines will still work against two variants of concern that were first identified in the United Kingdom and South Africa, but emerging evidence suggests that the protection might be considerably less complete.

Vaccine companies are already working on revising vaccines so that they could be deployed to block the variant of greatest concern, which was first identified in South Africa, if needed. Moderna has announced it would develop and test a new vaccine as well as a third dose of its current vaccine to see if it protects people better against emerging variants.



MEMBER VOICES

I am feeling relieved, hopeful, and very grateful that we'll be able to keep ourselves, our community and loved ones safe with the vaccine. To know that in the near future, we can relax and visit family, including my one-year-old grandson will be such a relief."

ELLEN MAHONEY, NURSING ASSISTANT, CAPE COD HOSPITAL

BLACK HEALTH EXPERTS URGE BLACK AMERICANS TO GET VACCINATED

COVID-19 has disproportionately affected communities of color. We are now seeing Black Americans receiving the vaccine at dramatically lower rates than white Americans. A recent Kaiser Family Foundation survey found white Americans are receiving the vaccine at higher rates Black Americans—often at double the rate or higher. In response, 60 Black members of the National Academy of Medicine have called on Black Americans to get vaccinated. In a strongly worded New York Times opinion essay published on February 7, the group characterized as lethal the spread of misinformation about COVID-19 vaccines: "Disinformation about the coronavirus and vaccines has pervaded social media, feeding on long held and absolutely warranted distrust of health institutions in Black communities. The lies are an assault on our people, and it threatens to destroy us." Authors Thomas LaVeist, PhD, dean of the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine at Tulane University, and Dr. Georges Benjamin, executive director of the American Public Health Association, closed the op-ed with a note of encouragement: "The 60 of us are Black Americans. We are trained health professionals. We understand the science. We understand our community. Many of us have already received the shots. The rest of us will get them when our turn comes. We encourage you to claim your place in line to get vaccinated. Do this for yourself. Do this for our community. We are asking you to trust our advice because we are a part of you. And together we can save lives." You can read Drs. LaVeist and Benjamin's op-ed here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/07/opinion/covid-black-americans.html>

MAJOR DROP IN CASES AMONG NURSING HOME STAFF AND RESIDENTS AFTER FIRST VACCINE DOSE

A recent study found that even after the first dose of COVID-19 vaccinations, nursing home staff and residents saw a significant drop in cases. The analysis, from The Center for Health Policy Evaluation in Long-Term Care, indicated that facilities saw a 48% drop in new COVID-19 cases three weeks after the first vaccine clinic was held. The study looked at nursing homes in the same counties over the same period that had not yet completed their first vaccine round and found a 21% decline in resident cases. Similarly, at nursing homes where staff was vaccinated, cases declined by 33% compared to 18% in facilities where staff was not vaccinated. The findings suggest that transmission may decline within three weeks after receiving the first dose of the vaccine. This is encouraging news for nursing home staff and residents. **However, this finding does not mean we can skip our second shot. We need to take the second dose to guarantee the vaccine's effectiveness.**

COVID-19 FAQs / LINKS / INFO

FAQs compiled and updated regularly by 1199's Benefit Fund and the first place to go for questions about the COVID-19 vaccine, where to get it, and other concerns.

<https://1199seiu.org/covid19vaccineresources>

Other questions about the COVID-19 vaccine?

Email VaccineQuestions@1199.org