

December 11, 2020

Scott A. Rivkees, MD
Florida Surgeon General
Florida Department of Health
4052 Bald Cypress Way
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Re: Vaccinating Community PCPs to Address Infection Surge

Dear Dr. Rivkees:

On behalf of the 6,200 family physicians, family medicine residents, and medical students comprising the Florida Academy of Family Physicians (FAFP), we appreciate you and the Florida Department of Health's (DOH) ongoing responsiveness and assistance with addressing the COVID-19 crisis. It is nothing short of a herculean effort to effectively coordinate response between DOH in Tallahassee, your county health departments, local hospitals and health systems, and more to keep all Floridians healthy and safe during this ongoing crisis. With this in mind and similar to our letter to Governor DeSantis, the FAFP requests that special consideration be given to ensure Florida's community based primary care physicians receive the COVID-19 vaccine during Phase I of Florida's Vaccination Plan.

As we know from previous experience in March and April of this year across the country, it is critical that hospitals and associated health systems throughout Florida prepare to best respond to the expected COVID-19 related surge of at-risk individuals who will be inevitably admitted for treatment after the holidays. We also recognize the need to prioritize COVID-19 vaccine administration to at-risk populations and those front-line, first responder physicians and healthcare personnel at the highest risk of exposure in these institutions. Consequently, it is critically important to not ignore the need to limit this surge by ensuring non-critical, COVID-19 positive patients have a trusted, reliable alternative other than the hospital emergency departments.


Based upon recent discussions, the FAFP understands that the five hospitals receiving the initial 120,000 COVID-19 vaccine doses are encouraged to consider community physician outreach in order to coordinate vaccinations when sufficient supplies exist. However, we strongly recommend, based upon the examples provided above, that a higher priority be placed on vaccinating community based primary care physicians who are unaffiliated with hospitals during Phase I. Furthermore, that patients be strongly encouraged to seek care accordingly, via physician practices and urgent care clinics, prior to going directly to the ER. Again, maintaining a healthy primary care workforce can be a gamechanger once the inevitable increase in cases and associated illnesses begin in late December and early January. Florida's family physicians stand ready to assist you and your emergency response departments/teams as the COVID-19 vaccination plan continues to unfold.

Please do not hesitate to have a member from your staff contact FAFP Executive Vice President Jay Millson (jmillson@fafp.org) to coordinate the FAFP's support. Again, thank you for your tireless efforts to protect the people of Florida and assisting to help maintain a healthy Florida during this ongoing crisis.

Sincerely,



Christienne P. Alexander, MD, FAFAP
President



Christopher Scuderi, DO
FAFP COVID Task Force Chair

cc: James "Jim" R. Daughton, Jr., JD