

First COVID-19 vaccines are administered in Oregon

By Gary A. Warner
Oregon Capital Bureau

The first doses of a COVID-19 vaccine were administered in Oregon on Dec. 16, beginning a process that won't likely be finished until summer.

Two Portland area hospitals and one in Ontario in Malheur County took part in a live video feed of the first doses of the Pfizer vaccine being administered to health care workers. The vaccine requires two shots, with about three weeks in between.

Gov. Kate Brown said it had been 292 days since the first COVID-19 case was confirmed in Oregon.

"This is truly the moment we have all been waiting for," Brown said during the event, "the beginning of the next chapter of the epidemic."

The symbolic first shots were given at Legacy Health and the Oregon Health & Science University in Portland, and Saint Alphonsus in Ontario. The Ontario hospital said it had already started inoculations earlier in the day.

"In the last two hours, we have vaccinated over 20 frontline caregivers, including providers, nurses, respiratory therapists, radiology techs and lab," said St. Alphonsus Chief Nursing Officer Dina Ellwanger.

Oregon Health Authority Director Pat Allen said the state so far has received 5,800 doses of the Pfizer vaccine, with more coming in the next two weeks.

With a second vaccine made by Moderna approved by the Food and Drug Administration, Allen said the state will have enough vaccine by the end of the year to inocu-



PMG file photo

The first COVID-19 vaccines were administered in Oregon Dec. 16.

late 100,000 people.

The state reported 4,475 health care workers were vaccinated during the first week.

For most Oregonians, the vaccine is months away — perhaps as late as summer, according to comments by health officials during the event.

The first doses are going to health care workers and other facility staff who are likely to come into contact with COVID-19 positive patients, or their waste products.

The second group to get the shots will be older residents of nursing homes and other congregate care facilities who have underlying conditions that make them especially vulnerable. Staff at the facilities will also be inoculated. About half of all deaths in Oregon have occurred in congregate care facilities.

The additional rankings for the next set of vaccines

is under review with input from community groups, Allen said. Essential workers and those over 65 with underlying conditions such as heart disease and diabetes are expected to be priorities.

Allen and Brown said there is some indication that the recent rise in infections is starting to slow. But state officials have warned that the "darkest days" of the pandemic that began in February are still to come.

The current forecast from the The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation in Seattle, which is among the metrics used by federal and state officials, forecasts that at current rates, the death toll nationwide is on track to top 500,000 by April 1, including more than 5,000 in Oregon.

Brown declined to comment on the forecast, saying instead that Oregonians needed to keep up with limited activity, social distancing, wearing masks and washing their hands frequently.



Eagle file photo

Grant County Public Health Administrator Kimberly Lindsay during a session of County Court.

Five new COVID-19 cases reported since last Wednesday

Hospital expects to receive Moderna vaccine soon

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant County reported another positive COVID-19 case Tuesday, according to a press release from the health department.

The health department has reported a total of 163 cases, including five since last Wednesday.

Grant County Public Health Administrator Kimberly Lindsay said the number of people being hospitalized due to COVID-19 in the county's Region 7 is at 62 as of Monday. She said eight people with COVID-19 were in intensive care units.

"After a brief downward trend," she said, "COVID-

19 hospitalizations are again trending upward, with numbers of hospitalized COVID-19 patients nearing previous record highs."

Rebekah Rand, Blue Mountain Hospital District director of emergency medical services, said the hospital received word from the state they will likely receive some doses of a Moderna vaccine, which was recently approved by the FDA.

"We have continued to actively participate in the OHA process, and it has been communicated that BMHD will most likely receive Moderna, but have not been given an (estimated time of arrival) as of yet," Rand said.

According to Lindsay, Grant County would not be receiving any of Pfizer's first vaccines that arrived last week.

She said that only the

larger hospitals with cold storage freezer units will receive the initial Pfizer vaccines.

According to OHA, they will prioritize people who are most at risk and hardest hit. Frontline health care workers will receive the first vaccinations, focusing on staff exposed to the virus in their work. Residents and staff in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities also will be among the first vaccinated.

OHA notes the vaccine won't end the pandemic, but vaccination will. Everyone must be vaccinated to achieve community immunity, according to OHA.

According to OHA, it joined with California, Washington and Nevada to provide the fourth level of scrutiny with a scientific safety review committee to review trial data to ensure that the vaccines will be safe and effective.

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