



January 5, 2021

Dear Members, Family Members, and Staff of the Veterans Home,

As we prepare for the new year, I have found myself reflecting on what we have all experienced throughout the last ten months. Together, we have navigated an unprecedented, global health care crisis. A novel coronavirus—COVID-19— changed our lives and has required many of us to adapt our lifestyles to promote the health and wellness of those we care the most about.

The news of an FDA-authorized vaccine is welcome, especially by those of us living in and working on the front lines of the pandemic. Be assured— relief is coming very soon for those of us at the Veterans Home.

As you may already know, state and federal officials have identified healthcare professionals and residents of long-term care as being among the first to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. As of today, providers across our nation have already received the first supply of COVID-19 vaccines.

Many of my patients have expressed concern about the safety of these new vaccines due to what seems like a short development and trial period. However, the speed with which these vaccines were developed is the result of *focused, collaborative work performed by experts across the globe*. As COVID-19 spread, researchers quickly mobilized to share coronavirus data—including what has already been discovered about known coronaviruses like SARS and MERS.

The vaccines use a technology different than what many of us are accustomed to— it does not involve injecting live or dead virus particles. Instead, these vaccines teach our cells to create a harmless spike protein that's unique to COVID-19. Our immune systems recognize the protein as foreign and respond by making antibodies. *This technology has actually been employed before in response to other diseases like Zika and rabies.*

In the United States, Operation Warp Speed allowed pharmaceutical companies to produce and stockpile vaccine doses soon after COVID-19 was identified in order to begin the rigorous work involved in clinical trials. Since April, tens of thousands of volunteers, including older adults, have received the vaccine. Each have been followed closely post-vaccination to monitor any side effects and to confirm efficacy.



Today's FDA-approved COVID-19 vaccines require two separate injections given either 21 or 28 days apart. As our bodies respond to the vaccine and begin making antibodies, we may experience some minor, short-term side effects like a sore injection site, muscle pains, fatigue, or headache. A smaller number of individuals may also experience chills and a fever for a day or two. I have already received my COVID-19 vaccine in order to keep my patients safest, and my only side effect was minor soreness at the injection site for a brief time.

I often hear patients saying a vaccine has "made them sick" or given them the virus or disease they're intending to prevent. I want to be clear that having side effects from a vaccine is ideal; it is how we know someone's body is reacting the way it should to the injection and building a strong, internal defense against the virus or disease. Please know the COVID-19 vaccine cannot give you COVID-19.

The Veterans Home is proud to join health care professionals, long-term care, and assisted living communities across our nation in taking the first steps towards ending this global pandemic. I encourage you to contact Katie Plendl, Admissions Director at the Veterans Home, if you have questions or concerns about the COVID-19 vaccine our staff and members will be receiving in the coming weeks.

As medical director, it is my top priority to support the safety and wellness of everyone who lives in and works at the Veterans Home. I am wholly confident this vaccine will help us move towards restoring our ideal lifestyles. Thank you for joining us in warmly welcoming all the possibilities brought on by the COVID-19 vaccines.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lauren Sauter, MD". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Dr. Lauren Sauter
Medical Director
Wisconsin Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls