

Committee of the Aging

February 4th 2021

Attendance:

Committee:

Present: Mary Anderson, Chair; Yosef Kalinsky, Asst Chair; Richard Allman, Glennis Aquino-Gil, Maria Luna, Fern Hertzberg, Public Member; Carol Weeks, Public Member

Excused: Cindy Matos

Guests: Steven Chang, NYP; Chris Nickell, Senator Robert Jackson's office; Verna Arthur, DFTA; Shuli Gutmann, Moriah Senior Center; Leidy Jorge-Pena, STAR Senior Center; Ilana Dunner, Riverstone Senior Life Services; Liliete Lopez, CIDNY; Julio Batista, NYP; Joan ?; Dr. Gary Altheim, Excel GDS; Andria Reyes; Cheryl Miller; Bernard G.; Zadi Adam

- Meeting called to order at 10:42am by the chair
- Dr. Steven Chang (NYPH) presentation about Covid-19 vaccines.
 - Why get vaccinated? While hospitalization numbers have decreased (now 91,440), the death rates continue to rise (now 450,689) from 26.5 million cases in the US.
 - Covid-19 can impact our hearts, kidneys, brain, nervous system, breathing, increase blood clots
 - Even if you have been infected, there is a good reason to get the vaccine, since it is unknown how long the antibodies your body produced to fight Covid will last.
 - We know that vaccines save lives – look at the history of smallpox, measles, mumps, rubella, polio and more – due to vaccines they have basically disappeared in the 21st century.
 - Vaccines work by taking a “mugshot” of the virus and then showing you are immune to the virus so that if it were to ever enter your body it will recognize and attach it with your immune cells and antibodies.
 - mRNA vaccines teach our cells how to make a harmless piece of the “spike protein” for SARS-CoV-2. When the vaccine enters your cells it reads the instructions and makes a copy of the virus to produce the antibodies. We are not putting the virus. After the body reads the vaccine it is programmed to basically “self-destruct” after performing its mission.
 - How do we know the vaccine is safe? We used the same safety standards with expert reviews as with all vaccines. Four phases of testing with tens of thousands of participants.
 - We now have Pfizer and Moderna – more than 26M people have received the vaccine so far in the US. They are 95% effective for those that got sick after having the vaccine. And all those that got sick were only mild.
 - How did the vaccine get out so quickly? Normally, companies don't start making the drug until Phase 3. For Covid the government funded putting a lot of money into a vaccine, which could have gone to waste, but it was a monetary risk, not a health risk. Also, they had been previously working on a similar vaccine for other infectious diseases.
 - Side-effects – can be sore arm, headache – but if you are getting symptoms after day #3 – it shouldn't be from the vaccine, but from something else – and go get tested for Covid.

- If you have allergies – you can get tested, but need to be screened for 30 minutes post shot. All people are asked to stay around for 15 minutes to make sure no immediate negative reactions. There are people on staff on-site in case someone has a reaction, so please wait the 15 minutes.
- There is a robust post-approval monitoring system – so if anything worrisome arises after people get the vaccine, we will find out about it.
- Do I still need to mask after the second shot? Yes. You can still get sick, but much better chances of it being mild. Also, we don't know in public who was vaccinated and who not.
- The WHO reversed their statement, and now say all women – pregnant, breastfeeding, or planning to get pregnant – it is safe to take the vaccine and much better to get a vaccine than not. There is a higher risk of illness if you do not get vaccinated.
- Important to communicate to the public that it is safe and remove all barriers from people who are waiting to get vaccinated.
- Q and A:
 - Why should someone with antibodies get vaccinated? We don't know how long the antibodies will last. If you experienced Covid already you know how bad it was and wouldn't want it again. The vaccine builds up antibodies for a longer time – and it is super safe and effective with really low risk. [when people are anxious they are more risk averse so it makes sense why some people are nervous to get vaccinated]
 - Are antibodies produced from vaccines the same as the one your body builds after having Covid? Not the same, but hard to know exactly what the differences are, we don't have those tests yet. It's possible that you can transmit the disease if you already had Covid.
 - How can we convince young people to get vaccinated? Some thoughts to share: (1) There are definitely people in their lives that if you get them sick it could be very bad – ex. overweight, diabetes, high blood pressure, older people (2) even young people can have long term complications with kidney, heart and more – we just don't know enough yet about this virus.
 - Will we need a vaccine every year? Unlikely, maybe once in 3 years.
 - Effectiveness against the new strains? The vaccine should still protect you from getting really sick, but you can still get Covid. Only the J & J vaccine was tested in South Africa.
 - What if you get Covid after dose #1? If you are 10 days after onset of symptoms you can get the second dose once you are 21 days post first dose. You don't need to be symptom free. But if you have to delay a week or so, it's not a problem.
- Chris Nickell – campaign from Senator Jackson's office to call seniors for health questions for seniors. Similar questions to DFTA. Goal is to feed into data we have already from senior centers and to encourage any those not currently connected to senior centers to get connected.
- Fern H. – right now completely overwhelmed with getting seniors appointments for Covid vaccines.
- March agenda includes Wurzweiler School of Social Work Care Café
- Maria – need to also add in the coming months a discussion about seniors and voting in advance of the June primaries.
- Meeting adjourned at 12pm

