Governor's Corner

Cardiologists and CV Team Members: Be Vocal Vaccine Advocates

Last week, the American College of Cardiology joined with most other cardiology specialty societies in releasing a statement supporting all health care systems to require COVID-19 vaccinations for health care employees. Remarkably, 25-30% of all healthcare workers remain unvaccinated, and as the federal government, military and large corporations start to mandate vaccinations for all workers returning to the workplace, it will be clear healthcare must follow suit. Our
country continues to lag, with only 50% of the general population currently fully vaccinated, though numbers are on the rise. The benefits of the COVID-19 vaccines far outweigh any risks, and it is our best tool to end the pandemic.

As of August 2, 69.6% of all eligible Washington residents had received at least one dose of the vaccine, a testament to the tireless efforts at the city, county, and state levels. But outside of King County, the numbers tend to lag per capita, and we are starting to see case numbers rise across the state with the delta variant. Our only way out is to get our patients and colleagues vaccinated. As cardiologists and CV team members, we are in a terrific position to be strong advocates for the vaccine, and should not equivocate. We all tend to be comfortable explaining data and risks/benefits, especially with new or controversial drugs or procedures.

More importantly, cardiologists and cardiology APCs are at the “tip of the spear” when it comes to caring for the sickest and most vulnerable, and our society understands and respects this role. When we speak, patients listen. Understandably, our days are full and time is limited. Diving into a discussion on the vaccine for an unvaccinated patient may end up being the last thing you want to do. But as America begins to head down the abyss of yet another shutdown and surges of sick, unvaccinated patients, we as cardiovascular professionals need to lead in pushing for everyone to get the vaccine.

I’ve learned I need to be better at listening to patient’s concerns, and trying to have an open and honest dialogue about the benefits of the vaccine. Vaccine rates in my practice geography are lower, and as I’ve attempted to make these connections, I have learned quite a bit. I may be wrong (let me know!), but I’ve broken down the unvaccinated into two categories. Those that are truly vaccine-hesitant and those that are against the vaccine for ideological or political reasons. The first group is waiting to see how things go, and is generally approachable with facts:

- The vaccine is safe and effective. They’ve been in trials since mid-March, 2020 and millions of patients around the world have been vaccinated, with no major concerns. Myocarditis and thrombosis, primarily in young patients, is rare and being studied. The biggest risk
• for the vaccine? Driving to the vaccine site to get it.

• The vaccines were developed and approved for emergency use quickly, but no corners were cut. The speed and efficiency were emblematic of full attention from the government and pharmaceutical industries during a once in a century pandemic. The vaccines won’t alter DNA and are safe in pregnancy. They deliver a virus “blueprint” to our cells to build natural protection against the virus, without ever entering the nucleus of the cell, where the DNA is kept.

• The vaccine is effective against the Delta variant and will make a possible major illness seem like a cold or flu for most people that get breakthrough infections. The risk for severe illness is very low in those vaccinated. The vaccine will keep patients out of the hospital and alive. Nationwide, 97% of patients hospitalized for Covid in July, 2021 were unvaccinated. With the vaccine, you are safer and highly unlikely to get severe illness.

The second group seems like they don’t want to budge. We hear stories of family members hiding their vaccine status for fear of being ostracized. We’ve all likely implored them with a sense of duty or obligation, or stories of taking care of patient dying alone in the ICU. I’ve even explained my inability to take care of patients like them with heart troubles because our beds are full and care is being deferred. But it usually leads to a polite nod, and then talking points from specific television networks. Nonetheless, despite the resistance, we have to try. And more importantly, as clinicians practicing in a pandemic with an evolving virus and its inherent medico-legal nightmares, we need to document we’ve had these conversations with our unvaccinated patients.

So as we enter the fall, with virus cases surging, it’s important to continue to remain focused on the vaccine. Many of us are understandably frustrated and exhausted, but our only way out are safe and effective vaccines, administered to every eligible human around the globe, and starting in your own institution or practice. Given the risks and benefits, the vaccine wins every time. Washington is doing well overall, but clearly there are communities lagging and at risk for incredible distress with the new variant, which started as a pandemic...
of the unvaccinated, but has now enveloped us all. Encourage your staff and advise your patients, unequivocally, to get the vaccine.

Want more information on how to approach Covid and vaccines with your patients?

Here are a couple good sites:


CDC: https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/hcp/index.html

Mid-career women are invited to empower the next phase of their professional lives with the Sandra J. Lewis Mid-Career Women's Leadership Institute.

Apply to participate in the first cohort of this transformative two-year leadership development program designed to support and guide CV physician women 12-21 years post fellowship. Interested?

See more here: https://www.acc.org/membership/features/2021/06/sandra-j-lewis-mid-career-womens-leadership-institute

Gautam Nayak, MD FACC
Greetings Washington CVT Members,

Hot weather and wildfires mean Summer has arrived in North Central Washington. I hope you have all stayed healthy and safe during the record-setting heat wave recently, as I know many areas of the state are not accustomed or equipped for such extreme high temperatures. Although I love summer and don't wish for its premature exit, I am excited about some upcoming events in late Summer and Early Fall. One of these will be our first in-person event in quite some time - a dinner program on Amyloidosis at the Wild Sage Bistro in Spokane. And don't forget to save the date for our 2nd Annual CVT Educational Symposium on Saturday September 18th. We are planning a fantastic lineup of virtual presentations and discussions for this event.

Check the ACC events page (Upcoming Events | Washington ACC (waacc.org) for more information on registering for these opportunities.

Read on below for more CVT news you can use and have a wonderful summer!

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News You Can Use

Catch Up on Chats from Around the ACC Coffee Table: Digital Health Discussion Replay Now Available

Did you miss the second chat in the Coffee with the ACC President series on July 24 that focused on digital health? The recording is now available on YouTube to catch up on the entire conversation. President Dipti Itchhaporia, MD, FACC, had with guests David C. Rhew, MD, chief medical officer and vice president of healthcare for Microsoft and Sanjeev Bhavnani, MD, FACC, practicing cardiologist and principal investigator of the Healthcare Innovation and Practice Transformation Laboratory at Scripps Clinic.

Learn more about the series and RSVP for the next gathering to be held on Aug. 21 at 10 a.m. ET on food and nutrition with guests Uma S. Valeti, MBBS, FACC, CEO/Founder of UPSIDE Foods and Kim A. Williams, Sr., MD, MACC, ACC Past President, Chief, Division of Cardiology at Rush University Medical Center, at ACC.org/ACCCoffeeTable.

Last Call For Applications: Vice Chair of ACC Annual Scientific Session, ACC.23 and ACC.24

The ACC is seeking qualified candidates to serve as vice chair for the Annual Scientific Session for ACC.23 and ACC.24. The commitment will be for a total of four years with the vice chair automatically assuming the role of chair for ACC.25 and ACC.26.

This governance model ensures consistent leadership and allows for continual improvement of the meeting. Interested candidates are encouraged to review the job description and complete the official application. A cover letter highlighting credentials that align with the criteria detailed on the job description as well as a curriculum vitae must be submitted along with the application.

Completed materials should be submitted to Jill Diamond (jdiamond@acc.org) by Monday, Aug. 2 at 1:00 p.m. ET.

Learn more and apply.
Nominate Your Colleague for an ACC Distinguished Award!

The College is accepting applications for the ACC Distinguished Awards. Those who are moving the cardiology field forward, are making advances in science and innovation, or are leaders involved in College activities, are among those that should be recognized with a Distinguished Award. ACC is proud to celebrate these members and encourage those who are changing the future of cardiology. Winners of the Distinguished Awards are recognized for their achievements worldwide and at the Annual Convocation Ceremony.

Nominations are due Sept. 20.

Learn more at ACC.org/DistinguishedAwards.

To learn more about these awards and the other awards the ACC offers, visit ACC.org/Awards.

ACC.21 On Demand Available Through Dec. 31

Thanks to all for attending and participating in the fantastic ACC.21 virtual experience! You can explore all the education from ACC.21 until Dec. 31 with on demand access.

Details at ACCScientificSession.org.
Upcoming Events

August 12, 2021
Overview of Amyloidosis: Genetic Testing and Drug Development
Time: 6:00 pm – Reception & Dinner, 6:30 – Program and Q & A
Location: Wild Sage Bistro – 916 W. 2nd Ave, Spokane, WA 99201
RSVP Today!

September 18, 2021
CVT Virtual Symposium
Time: 8:00am – 12:00pm
Location: Virtual Webinar
Register Today!

September 24-25, 2021
Annual CV Summit
Time: 8:00am – 12:00pm
Location: The Woodmark Hotel in Kirkland WA
By Invitation Only

November 6-7, 2021
WA ACC Annual Meeting
Time: 8:30am – 12:00pm
Location: Virtual Webinar
Register Today!