



Stuart Henochowicz, MD MBA FACP
Governor, ACP Virginia Chapter

February 20, 2021

The Honorable Ralph Northam
Governor of Virginia
Richmond, Virginia

Dear Governor Northam,

As the governor of the Virginia Chapter of the American College of Physicians, representing 3,992 internal medicine physician specialists and medical students in our state, I am writing on behalf of our chapter to urge you to increase coordination with and distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine to community-based primary care physicians and practices. Our chapter is part of the American College of Physicians, which nationally represents 163,000 internal medicine physician specialists and medical student members. Our members are primary care physicians that are on the frontline of the fight against COVID-19 and provide care to millions of American with ongoing health care needs unrelated to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our Chapter is deeply concerned that community based primary care physicians and their health care teams have reported that they are unable to access the COVID-19 vaccine. Physicians in community-based primary care practices that are not associated with hospital or large health care systems are finding it difficult to obtain vaccines for themselves and their primary care teams despite being frontline, high-risk health care professionals, while, in many areas, hospital and health system-based health care personnel, whether they are front-line physicians at high-risk of COVID-19 exposure or not, are being vaccinated before community-based primary care physicians. As primary care physicians, we play a critical role in the fight against COVID-19 by diagnosing, testing, treating, and counseling millions of patients and their families in collaborated teams of clinicians. Clear communication from the state and public health departments and other relevant stakeholders about how and where primary care physicians and their staff can get vaccinated will help speed this process along.

We also urge you to facilitate coordination and collaboration between primary care physicians and community-based vaccinators such as pharmacists and retail health clinics. All vaccinators should coordinate, communicate, and collaborate with the patient's primary care team to ensure patient safety and continuity of care. Community-based vaccinators should provide the patient with appropriate immunization paperwork and other documentation, refer the patient to their primary care team for any necessary counseling and follow-up care, particularly for patients with complex chronic care management needs and have a structured referral system to primary care settings and encourage patients they vaccinate to establish a longitudinal

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relationship with a primary care team if the patient does not have such an existing relationship.

In conclusion, we request that you do all that you can to facilitate the immediate and broad vaccination of community-based primary care physicians and their practices. Failure to do so will only further compromise the safety of patients who are seeking care for COVID-19 and non-COVID health issues. We also stress enhanced coordination between community-based vaccinators and primary care practices as part of your vaccine distribution strategies. Failure to meaningfully incorporate primary care into distribution and education efforts will jeopardize the ultimate success of vaccination strategies.

Thank you for your prompt consideration of these requests. We look forward to working with you to ensure that the state's vaccination strategies are successful.

Sincerely,

Stuart Henochowicz MD MBA FACP
Governor, Virginia Chapter of the American College of Physicians