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March 30, 2022

The MMS will continue to monitor developments related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) and the response by state and federal agencies. For current information, including updates from NEJM, visit the dedicated page on the MMS website: massmed.org/covid-19.

On National Doctors' Day...Thank you

A message from Dr. Allen

Dear colleagues,

I wanted to take a moment today – National Doctors’ Day – to send a quick message of appreciation to each of you. The MMS motto – “every physician matters and each patient counts” emblazoned at the entrance to our home in Waltham – has real meaning for me. Each of you makes a difference every day in the lives of patients, in the health of our Commonwealth, and in the success of our Medical Society.

Over the past two years you have weathered unforeseen and unequaled professional and personal challenges. Some of you have lost patients or family members to COVID or other illnesses. Relationships with friends, colleagues, and office staff may have sometimes frayed and other times brought you closer. You have experienced change in the practice of medicine and are adapting to a new landscape. And it is your flexibility and innovation, your constancy and resilience in the face of adversity that inspires me.
Please take some time to congratulate your physician colleagues and to pat yourselves on the back. You are truly the heart of our organization, and I am so proud to serve as your president.

Thank you for being my inspiration and for all that you do for your patients and our Medical Society.

Happy National Doctors’ Day to all.

Carole

Carole E. Allen, MD, MBA, FAAP, President, Massachusetts Medical Society

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**Public Health**

**More pharmacy locations in Massachusetts now offer COVID-19 oral antiviral (OAV) medications**

The Commonwealth has added more pharmacy locations to the list of those with COVID-19 oral antiviral medications (OAVs). Providers can refer patients for OAV medications to additional Walgreens, CVS, and Price Chopper in the state. Any provider can electronically submit a prescription to a store that has an on-hand supply of treatment courses. For instructions and store locations:

Download this [succint provider letter](#) from the state COVID-19 Vaccine Program or go to the [COVID-19 Therapeutic Lookup Tool](#).

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**BA.2 subvariant of Omicron prompts Mass. DPH to update COVID-19 Therapeutic Guidance**

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) has updated its clinical guidance for COVID-19 therapeutics as BA.2, a subvariant of the Omicron SARS-CoV-2 lineage, is now considered to be the dominant subvariant in Massachusetts. Currently, while the Omicron subvariant BA.2 is predominant in this region, bebtelovimab should be used for treatment for patients with mild-to-moderate COVID-19 at high risk of progression to
severe disease when the preferred treatments (nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid) followed by remdesivir) are not appropriate or available. This change in the guidance can be found on page 6 in the updated guidance.

FDA authorizes second booster dose of two COVID-19 vaccines for older and immunocompromised individuals

On Tuesday, March 29, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized a second booster dose of either the Pfizer-BioNTech or the Moderna COVID-19 vaccines for older people and certain immunocompromised individuals. Following the FDA’s regulatory action, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated its recommendations to allow certain immunocompromised individuals and people over the age of 50 who received an initial booster dose at least 4 months ago to be eligible for another mRNA booster to increase their protection against severe disease from COVID-19.

Separately and in addition, based on newly published data, adults who received a primary vaccine and booster dose of Johnson & Johnson’s Janssen COVID-19 vaccine at least 4 months ago may now receive a second booster dose using an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine.

Read the summary of recent changes to the CDC’s Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of COVID-19 Vaccines.

New COVID-19 Quarantine and Isolation Calculator

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has a new COVID-19 Quarantine and Isolation calculator. The tool helps individuals figure out when, and for how long, people with COVID-19 and their close contacts need to stay home, get tested, and wear a well-fitting mask. The mobile-friendly calculator is a simple and easy way to help people follow CDC’s Quarantine and Isolation guidance and get customized information that applies to their unique situation.
FDA to hold Advisory Committee Meeting on April 6

The FDA will hold a virtual meeting of its Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee (VRBPAC) on Wednesday, April 6 to discuss considerations for future COVID-19 vaccine booster doses and the process for selecting specific strains of the SARS-CoV-2 virus for COVID-19 vaccines to address current and emerging variants. Along with the independent experts of the advisory committee, representatives from the CDC and the NIH will participate in the meeting. See the news release for more info. The link to watch the meeting can be found here.

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