

July 26, 2021

To: Governors of California, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington State

- Governor Gavin Newsom, California
- Governor Steve Sisolak, Nevada
- Governor Kate Brown, Oregon
- Governor Jay Inslee, Washington

From: Arthur Reingold, MD, Chair  
Western States Scientific Safety Review Workgroup

At its meeting on July 23, 2021, the Western States Scientific Safety Review Workgroup reviewed the evidence concerning cases of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) among recipients of COVID-19 vaccines presented at the meeting of the CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) on July 22, 2021. The Workgroup also reviewed and discussed the presentations from the ACIP meeting concerning the possible administration of booster doses of COVID-19 vaccines to individuals with moderate to severe immunosuppression, particularly in light of recent upward trends in the incidence of COVID-19 illnesses and the widespread prevalence of the Delta variant of SARS-CoV-2.

The Workgroup concluded that, based on the evidence available at this time, there is a very small risk of GBS following receipt of the Janssen/Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine, but not following receipt of the two mRNA COVID-19 vaccines currently in use in the United States. Given the ongoing risk of COVID-19, the available evidence strongly suggests that the benefits of vaccination against COVID-19 with Janssen/Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine, in the form of COVID-19 related cases, hospitalizations and deaths prevented, continue to greatly outweigh any risk of GBS or thrombosis with thrombocytopenia (TTS), the other adverse event that has been seen in a small number of recipients of this vaccine. In light of both the recent upward trend in the incidence of COVID-19 cases and the widespread distribution of the Delta variant of SARS-CoV-2 in our states, the Workgroup continues to support having this vaccine available as an option for administration to those seeking COVID-19 vaccination. As we seek to maximize vaccine coverage, individuals seeking vaccination against COVID-19

should have access to and understand the risks and benefits of the Janssen/Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine, as well as the two mRNA COVID-19 vaccines. The Workgroup continues to strongly recommend monitoring for and reporting to VAERS of all suspected adverse events following receipt of COVID-19 vaccines, including suspected case of GBS, TTS and myocarditis.

The Workgroup took cognizance of the current data suggesting the approved COVID-19 vaccine schedules may generate suboptimal protection in individuals with moderate to severe immunocompromise. However, given the fact that additional (i.e. booster) doses of COVID-19 vaccines in use in the United States are not currently approved or allowed under existing Emergency Use Authorizations (EUA) from the FDA, and given that more evidence concerning the immunogenicity and safety of additional doses of these vaccines is expected to become available in the near future, the Workgroup does not, at this time, recommend giving booster doses of COVID-19 vaccines. The Workgroup reiterated that maximizing COVID-19 vaccination, especially in households and other close contacts of immunosuppressed individuals, as well as non-pharmaceutical interventions (e.g. masking), can help minimize the risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection and COVID-19 in such individuals and contribute to slowing the emergence of new SARS-CoV-2 variants. The Workgroup will reassess the advisability of booster doses of COVID-19 vaccines as new data become available.

Respectfully submitted:

Members of the Western States Scientific Safety Review Workgroup:

Arthur Reingold, MD, Chair, UC Berkeley School of Public Health

California Members:

- Tomás J. Aragón, MD, DrPH, California Department of Public Health and State Health Officer
- Eric Goosby, MD, UCSF School of Medicine
- Rodney Hood, MD, UC San Diego Alumnus and National Medical Association (*not present at July 23, 2021 Western States Workgroup meeting*)
- Nicola Klein, MD, Ph.D., Kaiser Permanente Northern California

- Grace M. Lee, MD, MPH, Stanford Children's Health and Stanford University School of Medicine
- Bonnie Maldonado, MD, Stanford University School of Medicine and Stanford Children's Health
- Mark H. Sawyer, MD, UC San Diego School of Medicine and Rady Children's Hospital
- Robert Schechter, MD, California Department of Public Health
- Peter G. Szilagyi, MD, MPH, UCLA Health and David Geffen School of Medicine
- Matt Zahn, MD, Orange County Health Care Agency

#### Nevada Members:

- Ihsan Azzam, MD, Ph.D., Chief Medical Officer, State of Nevada
- Karissa Loper, MPH, Health Bureau Chief, Nevada Department of Health and Human Services (*not present at July 23, 2021 Western States Workgroup meeting*)

#### Oregon Members:

- Laura Byerly, MD, Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center
- Louis J. Picker, MD, OHSU Vaccine and Gene Therapy Institute (*not present at July 23, 2021 Western States Workgroup meeting*)

#### Washington Members:

- John Dunn, MD, MPH, Kaiser Permanente Washington (*not present at July 23, 2021 Western States Workgroup meeting*)
- Edgar K. Marcuse, MD, MPH, University of Washington School of Medicine