



All Systems Go

AMGA members positioned to aid COVID-19 vaccination effort

By AMGA Public Policy Team

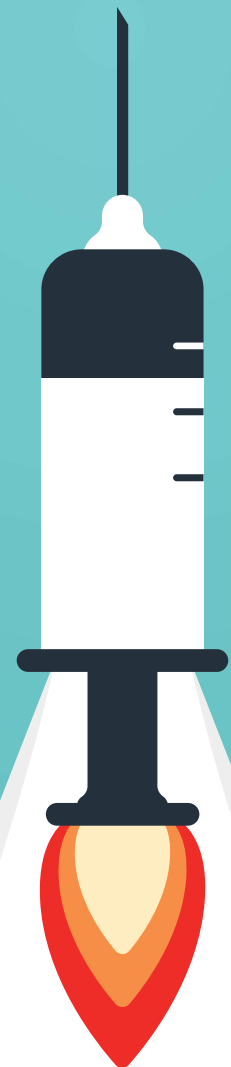
Shortly after his inauguration, President Joe Biden released a strategy to respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency. While President Biden's National Strategy for the COVID-19 Response and Pandemic Preparedness offers a sound approach to address the public health emergency, the vaccination effort to date has been marred by not only supply shortages, but also logistical problems that AMGA members are positioned to correct. AMGA immediately recommended improvements to the plan's vaccination distribution strategy so it takes advantage of our members' capabilities.

President Biden's strategy emphasizes the need for as many vaccine access points as possible. However, by focusing on community distribution centers and retail pharmacies, the plan inexplicitly downplays the vital role that multispecialty group practices and integrated systems of care should have in any successful vaccine distribution effort. While these other

facilities are an important aspect of the vaccination effort, the plan overlooks the experience and expertise that AMGA members have in administering vaccines and the role they play in providing care to their communities.

Focusing on Patient Safety

Our members, who are on the front lines of the fight against COVID-19 every day, have relationships with patients in communities throughout the country. These providers are able to leverage their existing health information technology infrastructure and care teams to handle mass vaccination efforts. AMGA members have established protocols and strategies in place for a variety of vaccines, such as influenza and pneumococcal. Once properly supplied with the COVID-19 vaccine, they can administer vaccinations to their patients quickly and safely. They are well-versed in all aspects of a vaccination campaign, including safe storage of the vaccine supply at the required temperatures, efficient



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scheduling of eligible patients, and monitoring patients immediately after inoculation for possible adverse reactions. Their population health infrastructure also enables them to conduct effective and efficient follow-up care, including ensuring second doses where appropriate.

Given the nature of this public health emergency, providing the vaccine in less than ideal settings may be required. However, that is not a justification for sidelining the facilities and care teams best situated to administer the vaccine. The Food and Drug Administration's Emergency Use Authorization for the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines requires a waiting period after administration, and AMGA is concerned that the space for patients to wait at other vaccination sites may not be as safe as what our members can offer.

Utilizing Information Technology

From the patient's perspective, the current vaccine system is confusing and uncoordinated. AMGA members can immediately rectify that problem for their patients by handling the scheduling and other logistical concerns for patients. Working with their trusted healthcare provider, patients would not need to navigate an unfamiliar scheduling system or travel to a community vaccination center. Instead, with electronic health record (EHR) technology, AMGA members can identify patients who are

eligible for the vaccine and schedule them, so they do not have to wait in line. The EHR system also triggers an alert, so case managers can follow up with patients to ensure they receive their second dose at the appropriate time. Relying on group practices to schedule appointments and provide the vaccine will alleviate some of the burden on county health departments or other community vaccination efforts for tracking patients.

Beyond scheduling appointments, our members' EHR systems also can track vaccine lot numbers and are capable of alerting providers in the event of a vaccine recall or other issue. These systems also communicate with state immunization registries, which keep public health officials apprised of how the vaccination effort is proceeding.

As additional supplies of vaccine become available, coordinating with group practices will be an important aspect of the distribution effort. AMGA's membership quickly identified the gaps in the national vaccine distribution strategy. Informed by their experiences, AMGA is working to educate policymakers and public health officials on the need to enlist our membership in the vaccine distribution effort. [CPJ](#)

If you have questions for AMGA Public Policy Team, visit amga.org/about-amga/amga-difference/staff-contact-amga-for-contact-information.

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