

CKM COV-19

Dear Residents, Families, Friends and Staff,

As Medical Director of CKM I am excited to announce that we are expecting to receive the Pfizer vaccine for the novel corona virus in early January to be available to all residents and staff and the second dose arriving 3 weeks later. Awesome! Finally, a very bright light at the end of the tunnel; mile 24 of this long 26-mile marathon of morbidity and mortality.

Covid-19 has become the #1 killer of 2020 in the US, surpassing 300,000 deaths. Of this number 80% have been greater than 65 years old. Disturbing to us at CKM is that 40 % of all deaths have been at long term care facilities but have only accounted for 5% of positive tests, thus the ultimate importance of vaccinating all involved at CKM. In order to return to “normal” we need greater than 70% immunity to obtain “herd immunity”. This will require a unified effort from the entire CKM community. As recently as September the US was estimated to be at only less than 10% immunity.

The Pfizer vaccine is one of several vaccines developed to create life saving immunity to Covid-19. It is a revolutionary advance in vaccine technology. Messenger RNA vaccines have been in development since 1989 at the Salk Institute, located at University of California San Diego. These vaccines have the great advantage of creating both cellular and humoral immunity. Cellular immunity, also known as cell-mediated immunity, is an important aspect of the immune system that allows the body to attack invading organisms on a cellular level. It is paired with humoral immunity, the part of the immune system that involves an antibody response. Both types of immunity are a critical part of a healthy and functioning immune system. This immunity is created without needing the actual active or even inactivated virus. Because it does not contain any of the virus it can not cause the disease. The injected protein stimulates our body to create antibodies that stand by ready to fight Covid-19. There is NO concerns of this RNA vaccine altering our DNA as it does not enter the nucleus of our cells and thus does not change us.

It is quite honestly an incredible technology that I can't wait to receive showing 95% effectiveness with no hospitalizations in the vaccine group. Of course there are potential side effects, although generally mild such as pain at the injection site, fatigue, headache, muscle aches, chills and fever that began 1-2 days after and lasted typically less than 1 day that could be treated with meds like Tylenol. More intense symptoms occurred in 8% of those vaccinated and 2% of the placebo group. Overall symptoms were greater in those less than 55 years old. Currently the only contraindication is known allergy to any components of the vaccine, which of course being new no one has. If someone has had a severe reaction to prior vaccines, then caution is advised. It is thought to be safe in essentially all 16 years and older that it was studied in, including immunocompromised and those with cancer as it does not contain any components that can cause the disease. Another concern is that the virus is mutating as all viruses do, but generally this does not effect immunity as they still have the same Mspike protein that our immunity will attack, for instance the measles vaccine maintained immunity over the last 50+ years, despite mutations.

So, Happy New Year, 2020 is closing and 2021 begins with hope of eradicating this pandemic.

Sincerely,

Dr. Erik Peck

Dr. Erik Peck, Medical Director of Christ the King Manor