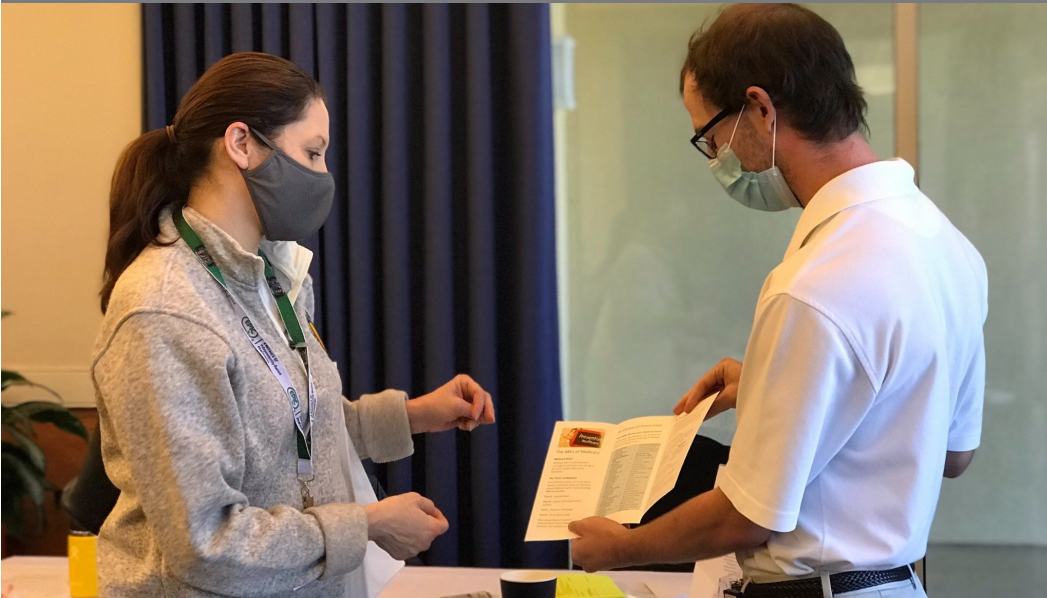


C.A.R.E.S. Pharmacy Network Newsletter

Issue 15



Please visit the C.A.R.E.S. Pharmacy Network webpage at: <https://alpharmacycares.org/>

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Hello C. A. R. E. S. Pharmacy Network members! We hope that this newsletter finds you and your family, friends, and patients well. We would like to start by thanking you for all your hard work done during the current COVID-19 pandemic. With the balance of running pharmacies and offering COVID-19 testing and vaccinations - we thank you.

To keep you informed on the most up-to-date information, we provide weekly updates about Medicare and COVID-19 through our

website (www.alpharmacycares.org). Feel free to check us out and/or subscribe. Don't forget, if you need more referral cards and/or pre-stamped envelopes, please let us know!

In this issue, we have a special exclusive interview for our ARDC spotlight: Commissioner Jean Brown. She is the current Alabama Department of Senior Services (ADSS) Commissioner and agrees that pharmacists and the program have a strong collaborating effect on the elderly population.

We also highlight a pressing issue revolving around COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy in minority patient populations and give information on how to address the concern they may have about the COVID-19 vaccines on pages 2-5. In addition, we wanted to give more information about the

potential types of COVID-19 vaccine fraud that has been reported and how to report them on pages 8-9.

We thank you for referring patients to us for thorough screening benefits. For our continuing education (CE) program, pharmacists and technicians can complete this at <https://www.alpharmacycares.org/continuing-education-program>

Salisa Westrick, PhD
Sterling Professor

Health Outcomes Research and Policy



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COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy in Minority Groups within the United States

Duy Thao Nguyen, PharmD Candidate

Despite vaccinations being one of the most effective tools for successful public health, vaccine hesitancy is a barrier preventing people from receiving needed vaccinations, especially in minority groups within the United States. Vaccine hesitancy is defined as the delay in acceptance or refusal of vaccines despite the research and availability of vaccines (1). Vaccine hesitancy has been an issue long before the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the target influenza vaccination percentage for 2019-2020 of 70% was not achieved (2). Vaccine hesitancy is especially pronounced among minority groups in the United States. Non-Hispanic Black children had the lowest reported influenza vaccinations compared to all other ethnic groups according to the CDC's 2019-2020 flu vaccination coverage report (2). The same is true for adult vaccination coverage; Hispanic, non-Hispanic Black adults, and other non-Hispanic groups which include the Asian, Native American, and mixed-race populations had lower vaccination coverage than Non-Hispanic white adults (2).

With the COVID-19 vaccine starting to become available, healthcare officials are worried that some Americans may be reluctant to be vaccinated against COVID-19. A biweekly tracking internet survey of over 9,000 adults performed from April to December of 2020 revealed that 26% of Americans were not likely to receive the COVID-19 vaccination once it became available (3). In fact, from April to December 2020, the percentage of Americans who said they were somewhat likely or very likely to get the COVID-19 vaccine dropped from 74% to 56% respectively (3). As of December 2020: 42% of White Americans, 63% of Black Americans, 47% of Hispanic Americans, and 20% of Asian Americans were reported they were somewhat unlikely to very unlikely to receive the COVID-10 vaccine (3). It has been discussed that vaccine hesitancy may be higher among certain minority groups, despite them being disproportionately affected by COVID-19. According to a June 2020 report from the CDC, regardless of these minority groups making up 13% and 18% of the U.S population, Black Americans and LatinX Americans made up 21.8% and 33.8% of the COVID-19 cases respectively. Additionally, the morbidity rate of COVID-19 is twice as high in Black Americans than white Americans (4).

There are many reasons for vaccine hesitancy including: patients may be concerned that the vaccine is not well tested; they may be worried about side effects; they do not see the benefit of getting the vaccine; or patients do not know if the COVID-19 vaccine is available to them (5). Also, another reason for vaccine hesitancy may be related to medical mistrust which has resulted from systemic racism towards minority groups in the United States, especially Black Americans. Research has consistently shown lower immunization coverage among Black Americans compared to other demographics in the United States. For example, Non-Hispanic Black children had the lowest reported influenza vaccinations compared to all other ethnic groups according to the CDC's 2019-2020 flu vaccination coverage report. As for the over 18 year old population, Hispanic, non-Hispanic Black adults, and other non-Hispanic groups which include the Asian, Native American, and mixed race population had lower vaccination coverage than Non-Hispanic white adults (2). In a randomized controlled trial that enrolled Black Americans living with HIV in the United States, nearly 100% of the participants had 1 or more COVID-19 related mistrust and more than half of the participants expressed COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy (6). Additionally, in a randomized controlled trial done in a pediatric primary care setting in Houston, Texas, it was concluded that Black parents were 3 times more likely to be vaccine hesitant than white parents in regard to their child's vaccinations. Black parents were also 2.8 times more likely to be vaccine hesitant than their Hispanic counterparts and 8 times more hesitant than their Asian counterparts (7).

What can we do about this?

As frontline healthcare professionals, pharmacists have the responsibility to disseminate accurate information about COVID-19 and the vaccines, and also effectively address concerns of those who exhibit hesitancy. Information such as how the COVID-19 vaccine was studied, created, and thoroughly tested before it received an emergency use authorization to the public can be the deciding factor for some patients who are concerned about the vaccine development. In addition to information about the COVID-19 vaccines, the benefits of vaccinations in general should be shared with the public. Pharmacists can utilize their motivational interviewing skills to identify why patients are hesitant to get the vaccine and can then address the patients' specific concerns. The key is to emphasize the importance of prevention rather than treatment, remind patients to follow their vaccine schedules, and to give patients the knowledge and to pass on the information to their community. A 2015 literature review explained that the interventions that were most effective in increasing immunization rates were multicomponent and dialogue-based (8).

In addition to one-on-one interaction with patients, pharmacists can also select and disseminate existing resources and materials to their patients. A resource to recommend to patients is the COVID-19 Vaccine Education Effort initiative (9). This resource is a YouTube playlist that addresses common questions about the vaccine such as safety, side effects, cost, and other questions patients have. The playlist was created by the AD Council and COVID Collaborative and was developed with multiple leading healthcare organizations including the CDC, U.S Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and top health and medical centers (9). This resource may give security to patients who are looking for reliable information about the COVID-19 vaccine. Currently, the most talked-about tool to address vaccine hesitancy is the use of digital initiatives to inform those who are needing more information within the minority population (10). Additionally, pharmacists can collaborate with other healthcare professionals to create digital infographics to distribute to their patients that summarizes the information discussed in the education effort initiative videos in a concise and simple manner. In order to achieve patient understanding and steer patients away from false information and rumors regarding the COVID-19 vaccine, it is imperative to share consistent information with patients across all of their personal healthcare platforms. This will include their pharmacists, primary care physicians, and other healthcare professionals. The multicomponent resources will give patients the confidence to trust and receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Overall, a culmination of sociodemographic, psychological, and physical barriers may contribute to the overall hesitancy of the COVID-19 vaccine. Therefore, pharmacists must utilize their skill set to tailor a strategy to address vaccine hesitancy within their specific practice setting.

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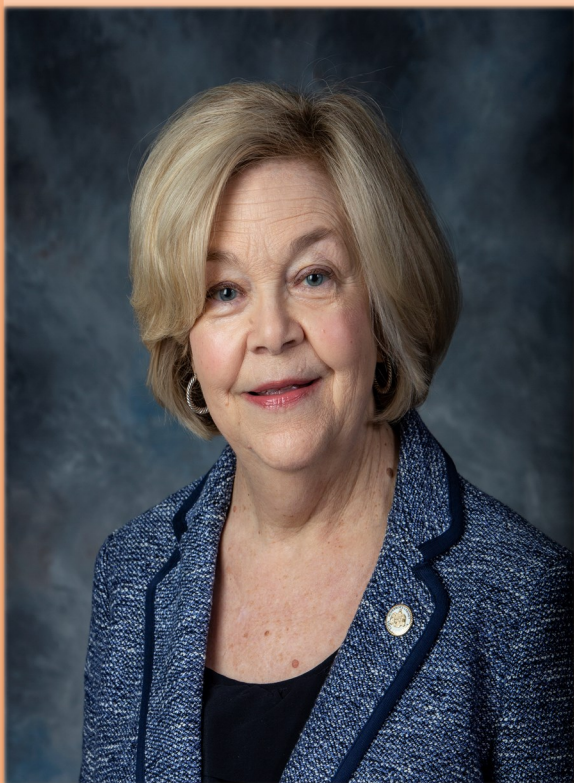
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ADRC Spotlight

Jean W. Brown

Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Senior Services (ADSS)



Jean Brown is currently serving as the Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Senior Services (ADSS). Prior to assuming her position with ADSS, Commissioner Brown received a bachelor of arts degree from Samford University and a law degree from the University of Alabama School of Law. She started out as a prosecutor in the Alabama Attorney General's Office, then served on the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals and Supreme Court of Alabama.

As a member of Governor Kay Ivey's Cabinet, her role is to implement the governor's policies to ensure that ADSS serves Alabama's senior and disabled populations in the best way possible to promote the worth, dignity, and rights of older and disabled persons. At ADSS, they promote the independence and self-determination of older and disabled persons, the efficient and effective management and utilization of resources, and welcome public support and input.

When asked about her motivation to continue the work to help older adults, especially those who can't afford to pay for medical care and medications, she states that it is an honor to direct the programs administered by ADSS because each program is intended to improve and enhance seniors' lives and allow them to live with dignity and independence.

"Our senior adults have made incalculable contributions to our state, our society, and our lives. Many have also made great sacrifices to care for their families. One of the tangible ways we can recognize their value and contributions is to help sustain them in their older years through programs such as the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) and SenioRx. Our SHIP program served over 35,000 people in Fiscal Year 2019, while our SenioRx program saved over \$35 million dollars in prescription drug costs. Many prescription drugs are very costly and we never want our seniors to have to choose between taking the prescribed doses of medicine and buying other necessities of life such as food. In addition to SHIP and SenioRx, ADSS also partners with the Alabama Department of Public Health and the University of Alabama School of Dentistry to help improve oral health for senior Alabamians. A person's overall health is inextricably connected to oral health; it is beyond dispute that poor oral health can contribute to malnutrition, cardiac conditions, and cognitive decline, and we believe this is an excellent use of our resources." — Commissioner Brown

ADRC Spotlight

Jean W. Brown

Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Senior Services (ADSS)

In her position at ADSS, Commissioner Brown deeply values the partnership with the Harrison School of Pharmacy (HSOP) and would like to expand that relationship in coming years.

“ADSS, through the SHIP program, believes the collaborative partnership with the HSOP is of great importance. ADSS has partnered with the HSOP since 2013 for multiple reasons. Because the mission of SHIP is to empower, educate, and assist Medicare beneficiaries, their families, and caregivers through outreach, unbiased counseling, and training, ADSS believes that because Medicare beneficiaries frequently shop at community pharmacies, pharmacists will benefit from training to become knowledgeable about Medicare. In other words, local pharmacists are on the front line in helping the same population that ADSS and the Area Agencies on Aging seek to serve, and this partnership is beneficial to all parties.” — Commissioner Brown

She also states that another benefit of the partnership is to train future pharmacists on the Medicare program and counseling so that students can gain an understanding of the intricacies of Medicare. Medicare fluency will allow the pharmacists to better assist the people they will serve in the future as community pharmacists as well as other pharmacy specialties. ADSS and the HSOP each have a vested interest and commitment to sustaining and expanding this innovative and best practice project over the next several years. ADSS is confident that the collaboration has resulted in enhanced education and financial savings for Medicare beneficiaries throughout the state.



Fraud Involving the COVID-19 Vaccines

Robert Alongi III, PharmD

With the high demand of COVID-19 vaccines being distributed and administered to the American population, there have been reports of fraud and scams in obtaining COVID-19 vaccines. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General (HHS-OIG), Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), and other federal organizations have made announcements to the general public to be self-aware of upcoming and present fraudulent scams involving COVID-19 vaccines. These scams target people by using the COVID-19 vaccine to obtain personally identifiable information (PII) and money. Some examples of COVID-19 fraud include the following: websites advertising fake vaccines, sales ads about the vaccines, limited-time surveys about the vaccines in exchange for a “free reward”, healthcare providers offering priority vaccination without regards to vaccine schedule, and alternative options that work better than the vaccine. These types of COVID-19 fraud can be dangerous to unsuspecting people (especially the elderly) who are trying to obtain a vaccine.

The FBI and FCC (Federal Communications Commission) has released potential indicators of fraudulent activity, tips on avoiding COVID-19 vaccine-related fraud, and general online/cyber fraud prevention techniques (can be found at <https://www.fbi.gov/news/pressrel/press-releases/federal-agencies-warn-of-emerging-fraud-schemes-related-to-covid-19-vaccines> and <https://www.fcc.gov/covid-scams>). For legally obtained a COVID-19 vaccine, a person will not need to pay to sign up for the vaccine or share personal information (like social security number [SSN], credit card, bank information, etc.). If someone is requiring you to produce this information to get a COVID-19 vaccine, it is fraud and should be reported.

With more COVID-19 vaccine fraud being discovered and reported, it is important to inform vulnerable populations, like the elderly, to be more self-aware about who they give their personal information to. Reminding people that obtaining a vaccine should not cost them personal information (SSN, bank numbers, etc.) or out-of-pocket money to reserve a spot or prioritize them as well. If they suspect they have been targeted or a victim of COVID-19 fraud, they should contact the following authorities and inform them of their case:

- HHS-OIG Hotline: 1-800-HHS-TIPS OR tips.hhs.gov
- FBI Hotline: 1-800-CALL-FBI OR ic3.gov
- CMS/Medicare Hotline: 1-800-MEDICARE
- FCC: reportfraud.ftc.gov

Fraud Involving the COVID-19 Vaccines

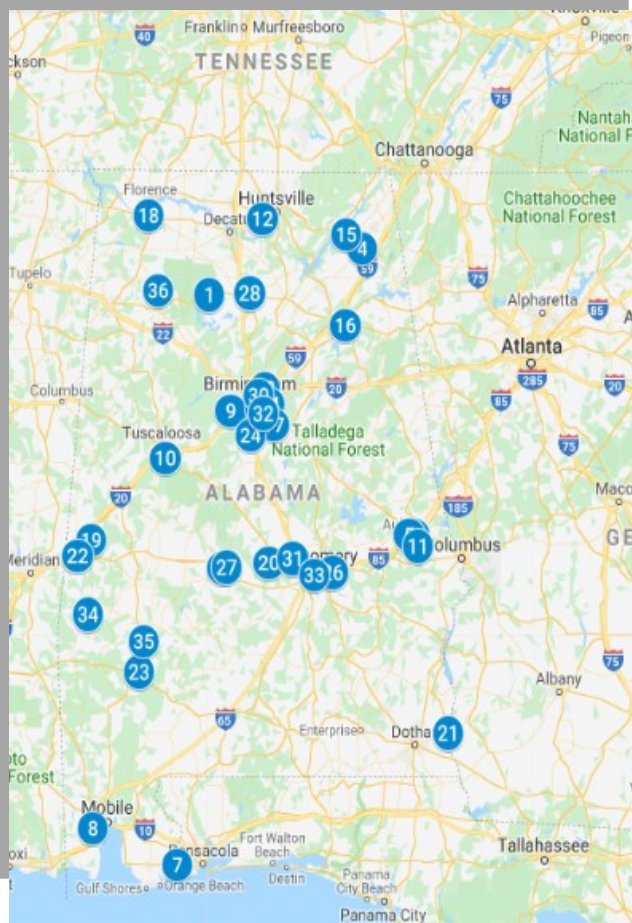
Robert Alongi III, PharmD

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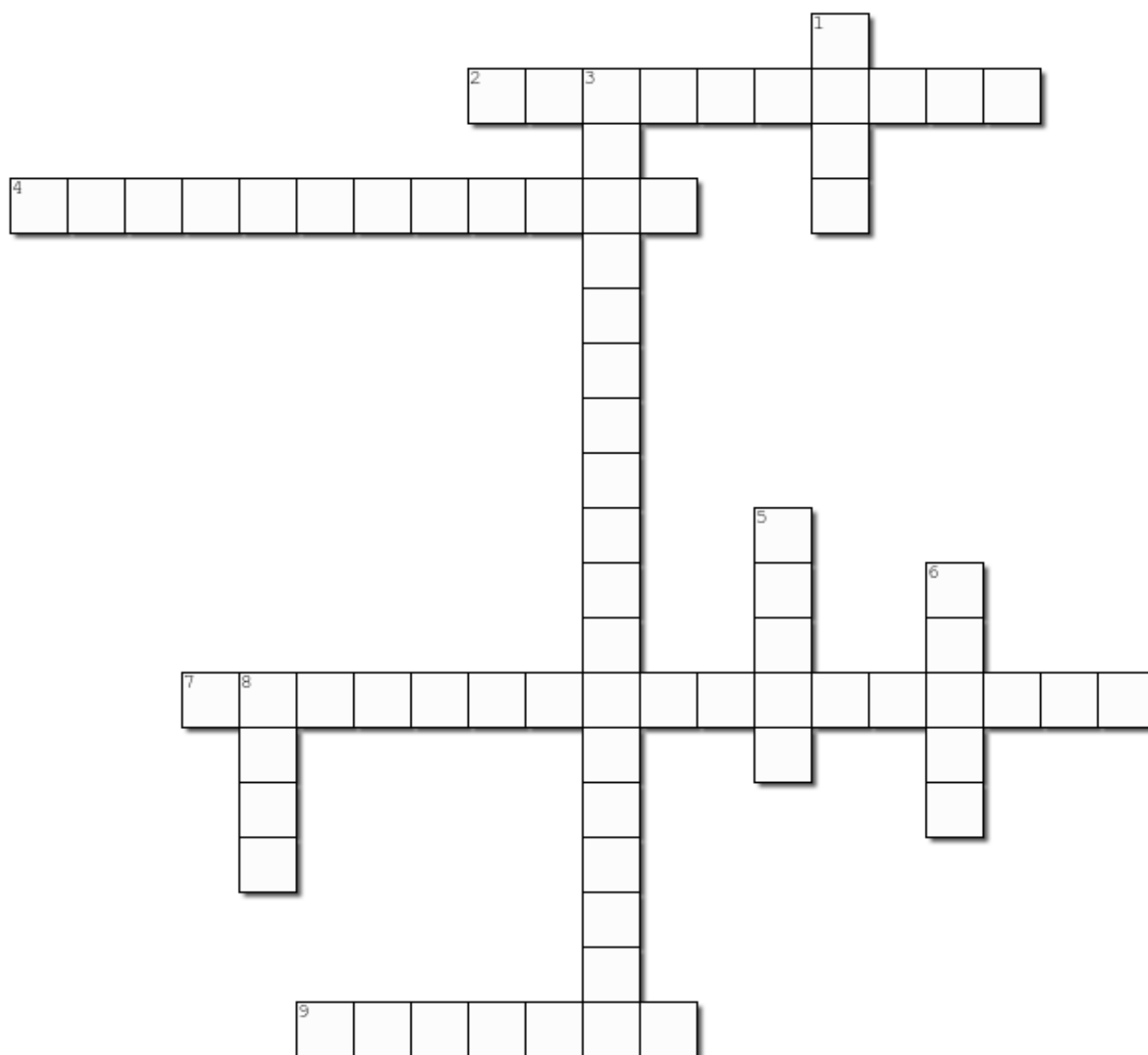
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C.A.R.E.S. Pharmacy Network Members

1. Addison Discount Pharmacy | Addison, AL
2. Kroger Pharmacy | Opelika, AL
3. Walgreens Pharmacy #6955 | Hueytown, AL
4. Rainsville Drugs | Rainsville, AL
5. Walmart Neighborhood Market | East University location, Auburn, AL
6. Walgreens Pharmacy #4589 | Pelham, AL
7. Lillian Pharmacy | Lillian, AL
8. Pharmacy Services of Mobile | Mobile, AL
9. Weldon Pharmacy | Hueytown, AL
10. Beauregard Drugs | Auburn, AL
11. Rite Aid Pharmacy #07054 | Madison, AL
12. Rite Aid Pharmacy #07013 | Birmingham, AL
13. Continuity of Care Internal Medicine Clinics- Brookwood Baptist Health | Birmingham, AL
14. Section Pharmacy | Section, AL
15. Gadsden City Pharmacy | Gadsden, AL
16. Fred's Pharmacy #3056 | Tuscumbia, AL
17. Walmart Pharmacy #4330 | Chelsea, AL
18. The Drug Store | Livingston, AL
19. Beasley Pharmacy | Columbia, AL
20. York Drug | York, AL
21. City Drugs | Grove Hill, AL
22. Walgreens Pharmacy #10525 | Tuscaloosa, AL
23. Walgreens Pharmacy #9427 | Pelham, AL
24. Winn-Dixie Pharmacy #0543 | Selma, AL
25. Autauga Pharmacy | Autaugaville, AL
26. Turenne PharMedCo | Montgomery, AL
27. Swift Drug Co. | Selma, AL
28. Borden Family Pharmacy | Cullman, AL
29. Walgreens #10333 | Birmingham, AL
30. Adams Drugs | Prattville, AL
31. Christ Health Center Pharmacy | Birmingham, AL
32. Walgreens Pharmacy #11651 | Birmingham, AL
33. Walgreens Pharmacy #9456 | Montgomery, AL
34. Willard's Medical Arts Pharmacy | Butler, AL
35. Family Medicine Pharmacy | Thomasville, AL
36. Haley's Pharmacy | Haleyville, AL



Complete the crossword puzzle below



Created using the Crossword Maker on TheTeachersCorner.net

Across

2. Who do we feature in our ARDC spotlight?
4. Pharmacists use _____ interviewing to identify patient hesitancy on vaccines and address their concerns.
7. What is defined as the delay in acceptance or refusal of vaccines despite research and availability of vaccine?
9. What age population is at the highest risk for COVID-19 vaccination fraud??

Down

1. True/False: Commissioner Brown deeply values the partnership with the Harrison School of Pharmacy (HSOP).
3. Where did Commissioner Brown receive her law degree from?
5. True/False: A phone call asking patient's to pay over the phone to reserve your spot for a COVID-19 vaccine is legitimate.
6. If someone is requiring you to produce personal information to get a COVID-19 vaccine, it is _____ and should be reported.
8. What is the name of the department Jean Brown is the commissioner of called (abbrev.)?



REMINDER!

In partnership with Alabama Department of Senior Services (ADSS), the C.A.R.E.S. program is partnering with the Harrison School of Pharmacy to offer an online video-based training and three ACPE approved 1-credit hour articles at no cost to you and your pharmacy technician!

1. Online Video Training :

Three-hour comprehensive program providing an overview of Medicare, the roles of ADRCs, and how to identify and refer patients to ADRCs using 8 online modules hosted on Auburn Ethos CE (see website address below).

2. Articles

Three one-hour home-study articles covering the following topics:

- *The Basics of Medicare for Pharmacy Personnel*
- *Pharmacists' Role in Assisting Medicare Patients with Limited Income*
- *Assistance Programs Available for Older Adults*

Access the CE article and complete the post-test and evaluation at:

<http://aub.ethosce.com/>

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Across:
2. Jean Brown
4. Motivational
7. Vaccine hesitancy
9. Elderly
Down:
1. True
3. Alabama Law School
5. False
6. Fraud
8. ADSS