

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

Issue 14



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

Editor: Robert Alongi III, PharmD
rza0015@auburn.edu

Greetings C.A.R.E.S. Pharmacy Network members! We hope that you all had safe and wonderful holidays with friends and family. With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic still happening, we wanted to take the time to thank you for all your hard work. The impact you have on the frontline, helping your patients and your community - we thank you.

To keep you informed, we provide updates about Medicare and COVID-19 weekly through our

website (www.alpharmacycares.org). Feel free to check us out and/or subscribe. As a reminder, if you need more referral cards and/or pre-stamped envelopes, please let us know!

In this issue, we highlight Pharmacist Haley Dobbs, a C.A.R.E.S. Pharmacy Network Member, who owns Haley's Pharmacy in Haleyville, AL. For our ARDC spotlight, we highlight Mrs. Jeanna Thomas who is the Area Agency on Aging Director at Lee-Russell Council of Governments. You can learn more about these individuals on pages 6 and 7.

With new vaccines rolling out for the ongoing COVID-19 virus, it's important to know details about them. We highlight both Pfizer's and Moderna's vaccines and give a comparison table on pages 2-5. We also wanted to highlight

important information about Medicare fraud in hospice care found on pages 8-9.

We wanted to thank you for referring patients to us for thorough screening for benefits. For our continuing education (CE) program, pharmacists and technicians can complete the

training at

[https://
www.alpharmacycares.org/
continuing-education-program](https://www.alpharmacycares.org/continuing-education-program)

Salisa Westrick, PhD
Sterling Professor



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COVID-19 Vaccines

Kavon Diggs, PharmD Candidate 2023

Introduction

COVID-19 is caused by infection with a new coronavirus, called SARS-CoV-2. The first cases of this infection were reported in China at the end of 2019. Many companies and institutions worldwide started working on vaccines to address the spread of the disease. Pfizer and Moderna vaccines were among the first vaccine candidates that finished the necessary sets of trials and were approved for emergency use in many countries, including the United States.

Pfizer Vaccine

Pfizer is one of the leading pharmaceutical organizations that developed an effective COVID-19 vaccine, which is currently being used in the UK and the USA, and other countries as of December 2020.¹ Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine has been approved for emergency use authorization (EUA) by the FDA due to the urgency of the public health issue and related negative consequences caused by the pandemic.² This EUA is for individuals aged 16 or older. In the United States, CDC and FDA continue to monitor vaccine safety using the existing robust system and a new system, called v-safe.³

Pfizer's mRNA COVID-19 vaccination process consists of two shots administered 21 days apart.⁴ It has been found that the effectiveness of the vaccine after the first shot is approximately 52%, while its effectiveness after the second shot reaches around 95%.⁵ One of the peculiarities of the Pfizer vaccine is its storage temperature of -70°C, which can be challenging to distribute and store this vaccine, especially in certain areas or facilities with no appropriate freezer.⁶ The vaccine received an EUA in people 16 years of age or older due to the lack of children and adolescents among the participants of trials. Due to the fact that these age-groups are not regarded as the ones at a high risk of developing severe outcomes associated with the infection, this cohort was not included in initial trials.⁷ However, the trial to test this vaccine in children is ongoing. The implemented trials suggest that vaccinated people were considerably less likely to develop serious side effects. These side effects were pain and swelling in the arm, headaches, and chills were documented.⁴ Such side effects as fever, headaches, and chills were more common after the second shot. Since the effectiveness of Pfizer is over 95%, researchers and practitioners expect that it will contribute significantly to the effort aimed at addressing the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moderna Vaccine

Moderna introduced its mRNA COVID-19 vaccine that goes under the name mRNA-1273.⁸ The vaccine was approved for EUA by the FDA in December 2020. The vaccine is provided in two shots in the upper arm muscle 28 days apart and is recommended for individuals older than 18 years old.⁸ The results of the clinical trials suggest that the effectiveness of the two-dose Moderna vaccine reaches 94.1%. The trial participants included the necessary number of people of different age, race, sex, and ethnicity. One of the benefits of the vaccine is the fact that it can be stored between -20°C and -15°C (-13°F and 5°F). Therefore, Moderna vaccine can be more easily distributed in a wider range of countries and communities when compared to the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. The Phase 3 clinical trial is still ongoing as they will continue to follow participants for two years to examine long-term safety, duration of protection, and efficacy against SARS-CoV-2 infection. Possible side effects were reported including swelling and pain of the site of the shot, as well as chills and headaches.⁸

Also, it is reported that the trials of Moderna COVID-19 vaccine now involve younger participants, aged 12-18 to reach the necessary number of participants (3,000 people).⁷ Notably, these trials face certain challenges as younger participants' parents are reluctant to provide their permission due to minimal risks related to being infected and still largely unknown outcomes of the vaccine on children's health.⁷ As for lactating women or pregnant women, CDC has recommended them to discuss with their healthcare providers to decide whether to get the vaccine.⁹

Conclusion

In sum, the effectiveness of both Pfizer and Moderna mRNA vaccines, when 2-dose vaccine is administered, is approximately 95%, which is a high percentage making the vaccines the optimal prevention against SARS-CoV-2. Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have been authorized for use under emergency use authorization (EUA) due to the threats associated with the rapid spread of COVID-19. The use of these vaccines in such groups as individuals under 16 years old, pregnant women, and breastfeeding females is still being researched. Both vaccines are not allowed if a person had severe or immediate allergic reactions to any of the components of the vaccines.¹⁰ The second shot of both vaccines is not allowed if a person had a severe or immediate allergic reaction during the first shot. Both vaccines may have similar side effects, including swelling and pain in the upper arm, chills, and headaches. The storage temperatures of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines differ considerably, making the Moderna vaccine more easily to be distributed and stored.

Conclusion (cont.)

Due to the reported effectiveness of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, everyone should consider getting vaccinated when the vaccine is made available to them. The spread of COVID-19 and its detrimental effects on people's health make vaccine the optimal option for people and countries. At this time, many people are waiting for their turn to get vaccinated. However, once most people who want to be vaccinated get vaccinated, we will soon need to discuss how to address vaccine hesitancy to ensure that we achieve desired herd immunity. Stay tuned for our quick overview of techniques and tools to address vaccine hesitancy in the next C.A.R.E.S. issue.

Summary Table

	Pfizer	Moderna
Delivery	Two shots 21 days apart	Two shots 28 days apart
Effectiveness	95%	94,1%
EUA age groups	16 and older	18 and older
Should not be used if	<i>People who had severe or immediate allergic reactions to the ingredients in the vaccines or during the first shot of the mRNA vaccines</i>	
Ongoing trials involving	<i>Children and adolescents, breastfeeding women, as well as continuous research of the impact of the vaccine on different groups</i>	
Storage temperature	Between -80°C and -60°C (-112°F and -76°F)	Between -20°C and -15°C (-13°F and 5°F)
Thawing	Thawed in a refrigerator (between 2°C and 8°C (36°F and 46°F) during 2-3 hours or at room temperature not higher than 25°C (77°F) during 30-120 minutes	Thawed in a refrigerator (between 2°C and 8°C (36°F and 46°F) for no longer than 2 hours 30 minutes or at room temperature between 8°C and 25°C (46°F and 77°F) for no longer than 12 hours
Refreezing	Not allowed	
Common Side effects	<i>Pain and swelling in the arm, headaches and chills, more severe side effects after the second shot</i>	

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Welcome the new C.A.R.E.S. Pharmacy Network

Haley Dobbs, Pharmacist of

Haley's Pharmacy in Haleyville, AL



L—R: Bill Hayes, Stacey McNutt, Haley Dobbs, Nathan West

Haley Dobbs is an Auburn University Harrison School of Pharmacy graduate who has owned Haley's Pharmacy for over 10 years. When he first graduated with a B.S. in Pharmacy at Auburn, he dreamed of owning his very own pharmacy. After working 35 years of pharmacy in the hospital setting, he finally was able to achieve that goal! His inspiration when opening his own pharmacy was none other than helping his community by serving as their local independent pharmacist. His pharmacy, Haley's Pharmacy, is located in Haleyville, Alabama and serves a population size of about 4,000 people.

When asked about his motivation about being a C.A.R.E.S. Pharmacy Network Member, he believes it's a resource help his low income customers afford their medications. He uses the information provided by the C.A.R.E.S. Network to promote medication adherence and well-being of his patients by means of connecting them with programs to get them the help they need and deserve.

ADRC Spotlight

Jeanna Thomas

Area Agency on Aging Director Lee-Russell Council of Governments



Jeanna Thomas is the Area Agency on Aging Director at Lee-Russell Council of Governments and serves the elderly and disabled individuals in various federal, state, and local programs. She has a B.A. in Political Science from Auburn University and a Master's in Education (Social Science) from the University of Montevallo. Her career is focused on overseeing various agency programs that addresses the needs of the aging population in Lee and Russell Counties. Some examples of programs she oversees are State Health Insurance Program, Senior RX, Medicaid Waiver, Senior Center Management, and Alabama Cares.

Mrs. Thomas' motivation for helping the elderly population (especially those who can't afford paying for medical care and medications) is seeing how these programs are effective and life-changing for the people who are enrolled.

She believes the key quality of a community is meeting the needs of those who need help, and creating and executing various programs that address their problems effectively. "When, as a Medicaid Waiver case manager, I first began visiting elderly and disabled individuals who needed in-home services to avoid nursing home placement, I saw how offering some homemaker and personal care services could help individuals remain in their homes for years beyond what they might have otherwise been able to do. I enjoyed visiting with them and listening to their experiences and helping them solve their problems."

In her current role, she advocates for all programs and funding sources available are being utilized to help the community. She doesn't want to miss any opportunity to serve her community in whatever way possible. If there is some program or resource out there that can help the aging population, she will find it and make sure it is offered to help the older adults, especially those having financial difficulties in medical care.

She believes the collaboration between the SHIP program and the pharmacy network is helpful to the people that they serve. The dependability of pharmacy personnel to not only counsel Medicare recipients at Open Enrollment Medicare Events but also their in-depth knowledge of medications helps provide a layer of assistance that they wouldn't be able to provide alone. She states that when working with them, they are always perfectly professional and compassionate with those who come to the events. She looks forward to continuing and growing the partnership between SHIP and the pharmacy network.

Medicare Fraud in Hospice

Dharti Patel, PharmD Candidate 2023

Medicare patients who have an end-stage disease or incurable illness with a life expectancy of weeks to months normally receive hospice care.¹ According to the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, 57.6% of Medicare patients in Alabama were enrolled in hospice care in last six months of life after being diagnosed of a condition with a high probability of death in 2019.² Hospice care is expensive, as the average monthly hospice expenditure is \$10,000. which about \$151 per day³.

Unfortunately, fraud cases can be found in hospice care. There are several examples of hospice fraud including: falsely certifying services or providing services to individuals who are not terminally ill, enrolling patients into hospice without the patient's or their family's consent, paying incentives for referral sources, and billing a higher level of care.⁴ Recently in 2020, there was a Medicare hospice fraud case in Sacramento California, where owners of home health care agencies, a Social Services director, and a hospice agency were guilty of exchanging and receiving illegal kickback⁵. Fraudulent kickback is when medical providers pay or receive kickbacks, remuneration, or anything of value in exchange for referrals of patients who will receive treatments paid by Medicare. In this case, they pled guilty of 60 illegal referrals which resulted in a \$400,000 payment from Medicare to these agencies. Because the agencies obtained the beneficiary referrals by paying kickbacks, these agencies should not have received reimbursement from Medicare. These kickbacks are illegal and could result in fines and possible imprisonment.

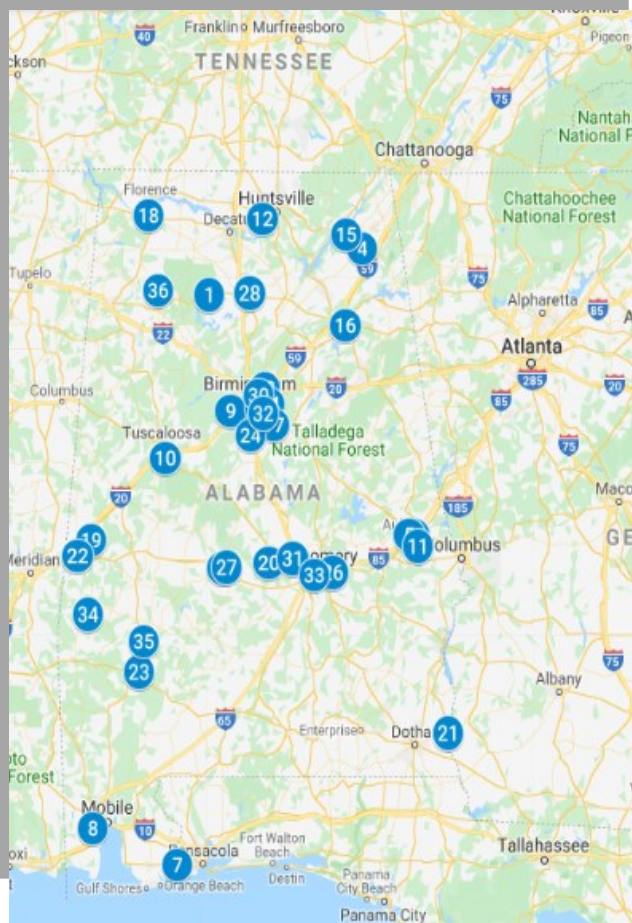
As you care for those who are older, it is important to watch out for and prevent Medicare Hospice fraud from fraudsters. One way is to make sure that the physician assesses the patient's condition and certify when the patient is indeed terminally ill. Second, it is important to know that providers must not accept gifts in return for hospice care or referral to hospice care. If you are aware of a possible fraud case, please report a complaint to our local Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) and the Beneficiary and Family Centered Quality Improvement Organization (BFCC-QIO).⁴ For SMP in Alabama, please call 1-877-425-2243.

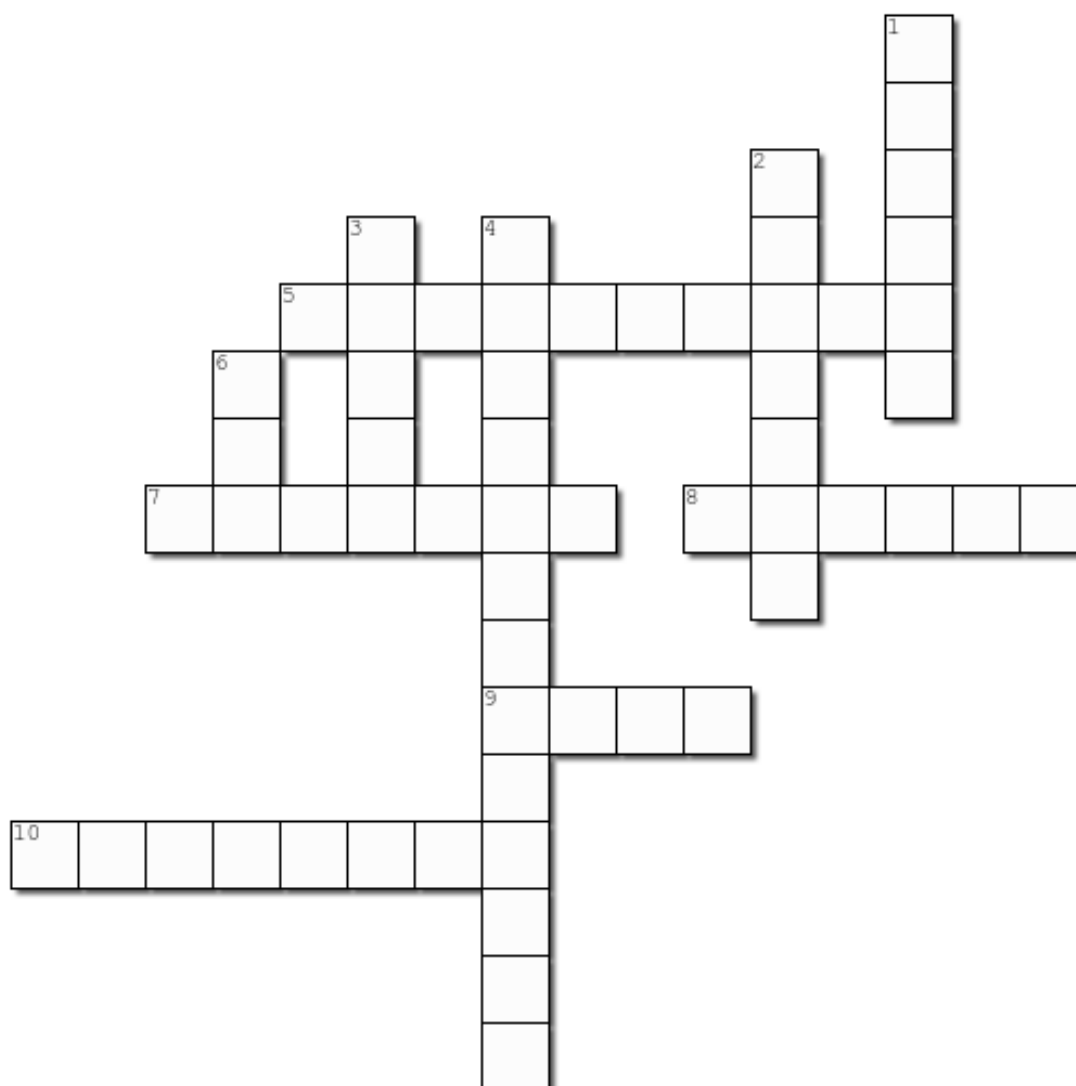
References:

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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





Created using the Crossword Maker on TheTeachersCorner.net

Across

5. Where is Dr. Haley Dobb's Pharmacy located in Alabama?
7. Which vaccine is more easily to be distributed and stored?
8. Where did Dr. Haley Dobbs receiving his B.S. in Pharmacy from?
9. True/False: Paying incentives for referral services is a type of Medicare fraud?
10. Who should you contact about possible fraud in Alabama beside SMP (abbrev.)?

Down

1. Which vaccine has the lowest storage temperature?
2. According to Jeanna, collaboration between the SHIP program and the pharmacy network is ____ to the people that they serve.
3. True/False: Once the vaccines have been thawed out, you can refreeze them.
4. Who do we feature in our ARDC spotlight?
6. How many doses does each vaccine require?



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/>

This publication has been created or produced with financial assistance, in whole or in part, through a grant from the Administration for Community Living (ACL).

Across:
 5. Haleyville
 7. Moderna
 8. Auburn
 9. true
 10. BFCC-QIO
 Down:
 1. Pfizer
 2. helpful
 3. false
 4. Jeanna Thomas
 6. two