



Department of Health

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Executive Deputy Commissioner

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Dear Colleagues:

This month marks the one-year anniversary of much of the worst of New York State's experience battling the COVID-19 pandemic. One year later, this fight continues on at New York State and local departments of health, at health care facilities across the state, and throughout New York communities. We remain on high alert for new variants of SARS-CoV-2, as discussed last month, while we vaccinate New Yorkers as quickly as possible. We are making great progress. Just over three months into this vaccination campaign, providers across New York State have administered over nine million doses of vaccine. At this time, roughly 30 percent of all New Yorkers have already received at least one dose.

March 30 also marks National Doctors' Day, which carries a special significance this year, as the pandemic has emphasized the critically important role physicians play in all of our lives. Many of you have spent the past year on the frontlines working with patients battling COVID-19. While there is still more work to do to beat this pandemic, New York State has come a long way thanks to your dedication and your commitment to patients and your communities.

This month, I would like to highlight the incredible work New York State's physicians have accomplished to fight COVID-19 and save countless lives. Physicians across the state have taken heroic actions to care for tens of thousands of patients hospitalized with COVID-19 this past year, and approximately 160,000 patients with COVID-19 have since been discharged. As physicians, you have adapted to the many barriers this pandemic has introduced in order to safely care for every patient, whether they are battling COVID-19 or another disease or injury, and you have risen to the challenge.

New York State's doctors have also played a pivotal role in vaccinating New Yorkers against COVID-19, a campaign that has made leaps and bounds after just a few months. Nearly six million New Yorkers have already received one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, and over three million have completed the vaccine series to date. During this effort, physicians played a pivotal role in ensuring that we administered vaccines to as many New Yorkers as quickly as we could, including discussing vaccination with patients who may be hesitant to receive the vaccine or who may not have had accurate information. Strong recommendations from physicians are one of the most highly effective tools we have at maximizing vaccine uptake. The [CDC](#) has a helpful Vaccination Communications Toolkit as well as several other resources for clinicians on best practices for discussing vaccination with patients and their families.

New York State was also the first to develop a definition for multi-inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C), which we recognized during the deadly spring surge in COVID-19 hospitalizations. The Department was the first to hold webinars for providers on the topic and the work of Department personnel was featured in a [New England Journal of Medicine article](#) establishing the connection between this emerging condition with COVID-19.

We continue to learn more every day about the clinical picture of COVID-19 and the various ways it affects patients of all ages, including MIS-C and other COVID-19-related conditions. As we have more data on the long-term effects of COVID-19 after the acute illness, we are paying special attention to lingering symptoms experienced by those with a history of COVID-19, also known as long COVID. The [United Kingdom's NHS has published a list of symptoms](#) that may be experienced long after the viral infection subsides, such as shortness of breath, tinnitus, and/or insomnia. The Department will continue to investigate the persistence of these and other symptoms after COVID-19 infections and facilitate conversations with you on best practices.

New York physicians in all settings have found ways to support each other through this difficult year. Throughout the pandemic and moving forward, the Department of Health is committed to protecting and uplifting New York State's physicians on multiple fronts. Beginning last spring and continuing to this day, the Department holds regular provider webinars to share best practices, new developments, and approaches to treatment and infection control.

The Department also recognizes the mental and psychological burden that physicians have borne due to COVID-19 and held a [webinar](#) last summer to highlight the issue of clinician burnout. This has been a difficult year for all of us, and clinicians on the front lines have faced an extraordinary amount of stress and loss at the hands of this virus. We will continue to uplift provider wellbeing and tackle physician burnout as critical issues facing healthcare in the months and years to come.

As we continue our fight against COVID-19, I want to express my profound gratitude on behalf of the Department of Health for everything you do to care for your patients. Your resolve and commitment to the health of New Yorkers gives me confidence that we will rise to any challenge that comes our way.

Happy Doctors' Day and thank you for being an invaluable member of New York State's healthcare workforce.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Howard".

Howard A. Zucker, M.D., J.D.