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# COVID-19 Advisory Commission on African American Disparities

## MINUTES

January 7, 2021

7:30 AM

Via Zoom

**Chair:** Jill Upson, Chairperson and Director  
Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs (HHOMA)

**Commissioners:** Pastor Rahsaan Armand, Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church  
Owens Brown, State Conference of NAACP  
Joylynn Fix, WV Offices of the Insurance Commission  
Delegate Sean Hornbuckle, House District 16, Cabell County  
Mike Jones, Kanawha Institute for Social Research and Action (KISRA)  
Reverend James Patterson, Institute Church of the Nazarene  
Senator Patricia Puertas-Rucker, Jefferson County, Senatorial District 16  
Tiffany Samuels, WVU Cancer Institute  
Keisha Saunders, Tug River Health Clinic

**Presenters:** Dr. Ayne Amjad, Commissioner, BPH; State Health Officer  
Dr. James Arnaez, MPH PhD, Lead Epidemiologist - Health Statistics Center  
Dr. Clay Marsh, WV COVID-19 Czar, WVU Medicine Vice President  
Colonel Tanya McGonegal, WV National Guard

The meeting was called to order at 7:34 a.m. by Director Jill Upson.

Director Jill Upson shared an opportunity to participate in a four-part video diary documenting your vaccination journey called the "Ambassador Video Series". Interested members were asked to email the Chair directly.

The Chair congratulated Reverend James Patterson's organization, Partnership of African American Churches (PAAC), for being awarded the Microsoft Skills grant. In addition, she congratulated Romelia Hodges on being named West Virginian of the Year.

Dr. Clay Marsh shared the following update for the meeting. He expressed his gratitude toward Adjutant General James Hoyer, recently retired, and Joe Peel who have been leading the Joint Interagency Task Force, which has been leading operations for the vaccine distribution. He shared that West Virginia is leading the country in total number of vaccinations per capita. He then explained data behind the priority scheme and categories for vaccinations.

Dr. Marsh discussed how the incident in Boone County where 44 people were immunized with the Regeneron antibody instead of the vaccine has resulted in the reassessment of quality and safety.

He then provided an update on the Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca vaccines. He stated his opinion that the vaccine should be taken in two full doses and not half doses as recommended by Operation Warp Speed. Dr. Marsh continued to discuss the recent infection rate and anticipation of another surge because of holiday travel and gatherings. He concluded with an in-depth discussion about the two genetic mutants of coronavirus.

Mike Jones asked if people with immunocompromised systems could be vaccinated. Dr. Marsh responded that it is safe for those who are immune system compromised, taking immunosuppressive medication, pregnant, lactating, or have been infected with COVID-19.

Mike Jones then asked if isolating and taking ibuprofen is the best line of treatment for someone who has worsening symptoms after testing positive. Dr. Marsh responded that it depends on the age and other health issues. He then discussed the benefits of monoclonal antibody treatment, benefits of taking Tylenol and baby aspirin, and other treatments available.

There was in-depth discussion about testing and vaccinations in correctional facilities. Owens Brown asked if inmates would receive the vaccine and how the outbreaks in the facilities are counted. Dr. Marsh stated that staff members in congregate settings are counted as an individual. Secretary Crouch further expounded on how congregate settings such as nursing homes and prisons are calculated as one; regional jails are counted as individuals. He then assured the group that medical care is provided and that inmates will be vaccinated when they return to the community. Dr. Amjad added that the correctional facilities are watched closely and that monoclonal antibodies have been requested for use in the facilities.

Secretary Crouch further explained that the infection rate and the positivity rate in congregate settings of nursing homes, prisons, and occasionally, outbreaks in universities and colleges are excluded from this calculation.

Tiffany Samuels inquired about the antibody infusions and people testing positive for COVID for a second time. Dr. Marsh explained the possibilities for testing positive twice: reinfection, never receiving a negative result, or just staying positive without being infectious.

Dr. Amjad added that there has been a reduction in hospital admissions around 5%-7% when patients enter the hospital system early.

Colonel McGonegal provided an update on the vaccine distribution. Currently there are distribution locations in Kanawha County, Huntington, Morgantown, Greenbrier County and Martinsburg. Additional locations with proper storage capabilities will be added.

Reverend James Patterson shared an update on the Surge Testing in Communities of Color project. In addition, Reverend Patterson shared concerns about the results of a recent survey, which indicated that 56% percent are not like to take the vaccine.

Dr. Marsh discussed the need for video of local leaders in the African American community receiving the vaccine. Reverend Patterson stressed the importance of making sure the communities of color have access to the vaccine now. Newer vaccines do not have the same storage requirements, which will improve accessibility.

Dr. James Arnaez provided a data report and shared that WVHIN offered ideas to address the missing data issues. He reported 45% to 50% of missing data within the past month, but a review of data for WVHIN reflected only 30 percent. Reverend Patterson discussed the possibility of labs not capturing the race data not being captured or losing race data in the process. Secretary Crouch stated that he was unaware of any reports of labs losing demographic data.

No votes or actions were taken at the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:43 a.m.

A recording of the full meeting is available at <https://minorityaffairs.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx> .