

14 June 2021

BRIEF19

A daily review of covid-19 research and policy

RESEARCH BRIEFING

Vaccines protect older adults. Real-world updates.

During the early phases of the coronavirus vaccination rollout, priority was given to healthcare workers followed by adults ≥ 65 years old, the age group most at risk of severe or fatal covid-19. Previous studies in the US and Israel have shown that vaccinating just that age group had an overwhelming effect on reducing the number of cases, hospitalizations, and deaths in a relatively short period of time.

Taking data from September 6, 2020 until May 1, 2021, researchers reported the most current United States findings in the CDC's [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#). By May 1, 82 percent of older adults had received 1 or 2 vaccine doses. Comparatively, only 42 percent of younger adults (18-49 years) and 63 percent of middle-aged adults (ages 50-64 years) had received at least one vaccine dose.

The implications of the high vaccination rates among older adults was seen in the rapid reductions of emergency department visits, hospitalizations, and deaths due to covid-19 as the rollout occurred. During the studied time period, the rate of covid-19 incidence declined 40 percent among the older adult population. Emergency department visits for covid-19 illnesses saw a massive decline of 59 percent along with an associated decline in hospitalizations of 65 percent. The metric with the largest decline was deaths which dropped by 66 percent. These improvements are all the more impressive when we remember that 18 percent of adults over 65 were still unvaccinated when these data were collected, and a non-trivial number of vaccinated persons had yet to receive a second dose. So, in reality, these numbers will be expected to improve even more when they reflect May and June. In support of that, as of this writing, the US recorded a 7-day daily average of 385 deaths nationwide (as of June 12, 2021). At the peak of the pandemic, in January, the 7-day daily average topped 3,300 deaths among US residents, nearly a 90 percent decrease. Much of this has been concentrated among US residents over 65 years of age.

These data continue to affirm that vaccines are highly effective, especially among the high-risk older population. Further declines across all age groups are also likely to be sustainably recorded if we reach the 70 percent vaccination goal for July 4, 2021 set by President Biden.

—*Christopher Sampson, MD, FACEP*

POLICY BRIEFING

WHO sets goal of 70 percent global vaccination within one year.

The Group of Seven (G7), has completed its meeting in Cornwall in the United Kingdom. During the meeting, Director-General of the World Health Organization Dr. Tedros Adhanom declared two ambitious goals: 30 percent of the world's population vaccinated against coronavirus by the end of 2021 and [70 percent](#) by the time the G7 reconvenes one year from now in Germany.

The statement comes on the tails of a recent announcement by the Biden administration that it will buy [500 million doses](#) of the Pfizer-BioNtech vaccine for the purposes of global donations. Those doses will be distributed by Covax, a WHO-backed program. Other G7 nations have committed a similar number, for a total of 1 billion committed doses. But according to the WHO, [11 billion doses](#) will be needed to end covid-19.

Currently, just 11.5 percent of the global population has received one dose of a coronavirus vaccine, with just 5.9 percent fully vaccinated. In contrast, nearly 53 percent of US residents are partially vaccinated, and 43.6 percent are fully vaccinated.

Because of access, experts expect that more people will die in 2021 from covid-19 than did last year. As anticipated, the covid-19 pandemic may someday be known as the covid-19 pandemic of 2021. *Various.*

—*Jeremy Samuel Faust, MD MS*

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