Twitter Thread by Arghavan Salles, MD, PhD



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Quick thread about vaccine distribution—personal story

Mom is in a high-risk category and is eligible to receive a vaccine. I've been busy in the ICU and honestly assumed she was signing up to get vaccinated because she's a responsible, conscientious person.

1/

After days of meaning to call, I finally remembered at a time of day when we're both awake and asked, just to confirm because of course she's on it, right?

Nope. She's not signed up.

2/

I'm in Arizona right now, she's home in California. I haven't kept close tabs on what's going on with vaccines there (I've been busy), so I ask her why not. She says she doesn't know what she's supposed to do.

3/

Easy fix, I think! I'm a good daughter, I think. So I google "How to get COVID vaccine Santa Clara County"

This takes me to the County website. No big deal! I'll get her the link in a sec, I think. I confirm she is eligible based on the current tier.

4/

Can't schedule an appointment there. No problem—I'm sure they'll tell us how to do it?

They say contact a healthcare provider. They then list several healthcare systems (not providers--I'm confused). Mom has Blue Cross Blue Shield. Maybe you've heard of it? Not on the list.

5/

Hmmmm….I'll just go to the Blue Cross Blue Shield website. Surely, they'll have information there, right? Wrong.

First of all, COVID is not even on their menu (on my mobile browser). So I tell Mom she should call her doctor.

6/

But I'm also thinking there's no way this doctor is supposed to manage every single patient's vaccine appointment, right? That makes no sense. And shouldn't someone have communicated something to the people who are eligible at this point??

So I keep digging.

7/

I scroll down on the BCBS website and find "COVID-19 Vaccines." A-ha! This will be it. I mean, I'm on the website for her insurer, and this is the link for the vaccine. Done!

Nope.

8/

Their section on "When and where to get vaccinated" takes me to a site from which I can select the state. Remember that I started on the COUNTY website—the most local government resource available! Now I have to go to the state site. Fine.

9/

I click on the link, which takes me to the CDC. I select California from the menu. Maybe this will be helpful? I click on the "COVID-19 Vaccines" section. Wait for it…

Absolutely nothing about scheduling!

10/

I scroll down to the "Learn More" section because, well, I would like to learn more. Specifically, I would like to learn how to schedule my only mother, the one I worry about every day when I'm in the ICU caring for patients with COVID, FOR A VACCINE.

11/

Sadly, while the "Learn More" section has lots of information, it has nothing about scheduling a vaccine. I go back to the California Public Health website and see a link at the bottom to go to the California COVID-19 Updates page. I cross my fingers and click on that.

12/

I scroll down to “When, where, and how can I get a vaccine?” Soooo promising! I scroll through a bunch of generic information and get down to the “Questions and answers” section. I click on “How can I get the COVID-19 vaccination?”

13/

“Most Californians will be vaccinated at community vaccination sites, doctor’s offices, clinics, or pharmacies.”

■■■■

Seriously?

14/

I went back to BCBS, which has a link to check for in-network providers. Fortunately, some of the pharmacies in her town apparently have vaccines.

But who knows how one accesses those?

15/

That’s all I know for now. I gave up because I need to go to sleep so I can get up early and get back to the ICU.

I just wanted to share this because holy smokes how will we get 100 million vaccines delivered in 100 days if it’s this hard to figure it out??

16/

Btw Mom and I have 2 PhD’s and 1 MD between us (granted she hasn't put her cognitive power to the task yet, and I'm sleep deprived, but still!). And there may be a link on one of these sites I've missed, but really it SHOULD NOT BE THIS HARD.

17/17

cc @ASlavitt @JoyAnnReid @MollyJongFast @DoctorYasmin @drjessigold @RoxanaDaneshjou @FutureDocs @DoctorsForBiden @alikhan28 @GavinNewsom