FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Dec. 21, 2020

VA Providence Begins Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – The VA Providence Healthcare System began COVID-19 vaccination with the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine today at the Providence VA Medical Center, following the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Emergency Use Authorization for the vaccine.

"The VA Providence Healthcare System is proud to begin offering the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine to our health care personnel," said Lawrence Connell, director of the VA Providence Healthcare System. "As vaccine supplies increase, our ultimate goal is to offer free COVID-19 vaccination to all Veterans and employees who want to be vaccinated."

The Providence VAMC is one of 113 VA medical centers across the country to receive the first limited supply of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. Sites were identified based on need for the vaccine according to CDC's 1A prioritization and capacity to store the vaccine at -20∘C.

The Moderna COVID-19 vaccine was 94 percent effective in clinical trials in preventing COVID-19 disease. The vaccine is administered in two doses, 28 days apart. The side effects appear to be similar to those of other vaccines and are short-lived.

Thirty-seven medical centers began offering the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to health care personnel and Veterans Dec. 14. Fifteen additional VA facilities will receive an allocation of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine the week of December 21.

Even after receiving COVID-19 vaccination, employees and Veterans should continue wearing face coverings, practicing physical distancing and washing hands often.

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As more vaccine becomes available, VA care teams will reach out to eligible Veterans to schedule vaccinations. There is no need to preregister or come to a facility to sign up.

Veterans can get up-to-date information and sign up to receive regular updates on the vaccine on VA's COVID-19 vaccine webpage at https://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/, which launched Dec. 11, 2020.

From left to right: Brandan Thomas, materials handler with the VA Providence Healthcare System, Erin Clare Sears, associate director for operations, Lawrence Connell, system director, Matt Goulet, associate director for patient care and Dr. Satish Sharma, chief of the medical staff, receive the initial Moderna COVID-19 vaccine shipment at the Providence VA Medical Center warehouse, Dec. 21, 2020 (VA Providence HCS photo by Winfield Danielson).

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Dr. Michael Siclari, an Army Veteran and physician in the Providence VA Medical Center's Emergency Department, and Mary Beth Smith, Air Force Veteran and nurse manager of the Emergency Department, receive the first Moderna COVID-19 vaccinations in the VA Providence Healthcare System from nurse practitioners Bridget Henley and Caleb McVey, Dec. 21, 2020 (VA Providence HCS photo by Winfield Danielson).

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Not all healthcare workers are doctors or nurses! Steven Mitchell, an Army Veteran and housekeeper with the Environmental Management Service at the Providence VA Medical Center, was the third person in the VA Providence Healthcare System to receive the Moderna COVID-19 vaccination, which was given by nurse practitioner Caleb McVey, Dec. 21, 2020. Housekeepers play a critical role in health care, disinfecting surfaces and equipment, changing and laundering linens, and performing a variety of other tasks that ensure facilities are safe and sterile, helping prevent any infection from spreading. (VA Providence HCS photo by Winfield Danielson)

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