

NEWS TO KNOW



December 2020

Alliance News



[Washington State's Top Public Health Doctor Kathy Lofy Sees "A Path Back to Normalcy Now"](#)

As Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccines arrive in Washington state and providers ready for administering the first doses as part of the state's distribution plan, Washington State Health Officer and Chief Science Officer Dr. Kathy Lofy takes a moment to [speak](#) with Washington Health Alliance Executive Director Nancy Giunto.

Dr. Lofy says the state will receive about 220,000 Pfizer vaccines and if the Moderna vaccine is approved by the Food and Drug Administration, the total number of vaccine doses will increase to about 400,000. While that is good news, she says it still falls short of the number needed to vaccinate all 7.5 million Washingtonians. In the meantime, Dr. Lofy recommends that we continue wearing masks, practicing social distancing, limiting social interactions, and working from home as much as possible to try to contain the spread. The conversation with the Alliance's Nancy Giunto includes:

- the latest information on COVID illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths;
- the practicalities involved with storing the Pfizer vaccine at negative 80 degrees;
- which groups will receive the vaccine during [Phase 1A distribution](#);
- the mechanisms for notifying people when it's their time to receive the vaccine;
- how the vaccine is being paid for;
- the challenge of double vaccine doses; and
- the role of equity in the development of the state's distribution plan.

Dr. Lofy, who is leaving her position with the state next week, recognized the sacrifices made by Washingtonians over the past year and says she is optimistic. "We are at the beginning of the end. It's going to take a long time to get to the end, but I can definitely see a light at the end of the tunnel and I can see a path back to normalcy now."

See the complete interview [here](#).



Register now for our January Webinar, [“From Impossible to Implementation: Mobilizing Collective Action Around Social Determinants of Health”](#)

Join Bree Collaborative and the Washington Health Alliance on **Thursday January 21, 2021 from 11:00 am - 12:30 pm PST** for the first of our four-part “Framework for Action” webinar series, sponsored by Cambia Grove. Hear from national and local leaders about specific steps we can all take to collectively impact the social and moral determinants of health.

We will be joined by:

- **Sara Singleton**, Principal at [Leavitt Partners, LLC](#), and advisor to the [National Alliance to Impact Social Determinants of Health](#), will share lessons learned and resources from their multi-sector partnerships.
- **Alison Poulsen**, Executive Director of [Better Health Together](#), will talk about local partnerships they use to collectively address the root causes of social need.

More local speakers coming soon!

Register [here](#).



[Creating a Better Path Forward Together](#)

Last week, an expert panel, sponsored by the Network for Regional Health Care Improvement (NRHI) and moderated by Alliance Executive Director Nancy Giunto, reflected on the lessons learned over the past year and how best to apply them going forward. The participants of [Stronger Together: Applying Lessons from 2020 to Create a Better Path Forward](#) offered no-nonsense observations on a wide range of topics including short and long-term policy opportunities, testing capacity, vaccine distribution, equity, and care delivery.

Director of the Duke-Margolis Center for Health Policy, Dr. Mark McClellan, MD, PhD, said care delivery transformed in many ways in short order and not just an increase in telehealth and mental health services. Some organizations have made bigger changes like implementing at-home chemotherapy, kidney dialysis treatment, and hospital services. But, he expressed concern for the services that have not recovered. “Good primary care services, such as colonoscopies, vaccinations, mammograms and primary care benefits are down. Those will catch up with us, if we’re not careful.” McClellan says he’s encouraged by organizations shifting from fee-for-service to value-based payment models, but there is still a lot of work to do. Find out more with [Value-Based Care in the COVID-19 Era: Enabling Health Care Response and Resilience](#).

Co-founder and Professor of Practice, Biomedical Diagnostics at Arizona State University Mara Aspinall says she sees two priorities looking ahead. Her first is reopening schools because “they are so critical for learning, for socialization, for food, for the kids and for a community.” And her second is on increasing the availability of tests to enable us to take back control from the “invisible enemy.” “I hope and believe that there are going to be enough tests for all of us to do, whether it’s at CVS, your office, or the school, or, I hope, at home, so that you can get that answer and get that control and decide what you want to do with that.”

President and CEO of HealthBegins Dr. Rishi Manchanda, MD, MPH, expressed optimism that the new administration will enable trusted community members to be part of the pandemic’s solution. Recognizing that “public health moves at the speed of trust,” he was encouraged by the [Health Force and Resilience Force Act of 2020](#) that will provide the funding to train 100,000 individuals from communities hardest hit by this pandemic to amplify the voices of trusted health care professionals, health officials and governmental agencies. “It’s time to really make sure that when it comes to testing, tracing, and vaccine deployment that we don’t sacrifice equity at the altar of expediency. But, in fact, do the opposite, using an equity frame.”

In order for that and other funding such as eviction relief, continued unemployment benefits, and help for student borrowers, Congress will have to act. President of Alliance for Health Policy Sarah Dash, MPH, expects there to be movement by the end of the year, but she expressed frustration at Congressional failure to take action before the threat of government shutdown. For that, she believes the American people are responsible because they do not hold their elected officials more accountable. A continuing resolution extended the original December 11th deadline to December 18th. "This is something we're going to keep seeing over and over again. This is like a 6th grader that hasn't done their report and it's the last day and they finally do it. I mean frankly from the perspective of our democracy, this is something that we need to keep working on and we have a way to go."

[NRHI](#) is a national membership organization largely made up of regional health collaboratives like the Alliance, nonprofit organizations governed by multi-stakeholder boards comprised of payers, providers, purchasers, and patients dedicated to working together to share what's working and spread innovation nationwide. Nancy is a longtime and active member of the NRHI board and serves on its Executive Committee.

View the complete panel discussion [here](#).

Washington State Health Care News



[COVID-19 Restrictions Extended](#)

Last week, Governor Jay Inslee [announced](#) a three-week extension until January 4th of the current COVID-19 [restrictions](#) that have eliminated indoor dining at restaurants and bars, closed gyms, and limited occupancy at retail stores to 25%. The Governor also announced \$50 million in additional economic relief for businesses. More than 16,000 applications have already been submitted for economic support.



[The 35-Year-Old Scientist Who Led Moderna's Efforts to Create a COVID-19 Vaccine](#) – ABC News

The FDA is considering emergency use authorization for the Moderna vaccine that included Seattle as one of its many testing sites.



[States Ranked by COVID-19 Test Positivity Rates](#) – Becker's Hospital Review

Compare positive COVID-19 tests in states across the country.



[Washington Employers Unite for Racial Equity: New Report Highlights Inequities](#) – NWFacts.com

In conjunction with a new report outlining disparities faced by Black Washingtonians, nearly 60 Washington businesses and philanthropies pledge to work together and spend \$2 billion over the next five years to advance racial equity.

National Health Care News



["No Surprises Act" Offers National Relief for Surprise Medical Billing](#)

Washington Senator Patty Murray [announces](#) a bipartisan deal for federal legislation, similar to Washington's state's [Balanced Billing Protection Act](#), that will expand protections and end surprise medical bills across the country. "Getting this done is especially important right now, because we have seen during this pandemic just how devastating it is for patients to get a surprise bill they didn't expect and can't afford, for lifesaving care they thought was covered." Industry groups that opposed the

provisions relating to benchmark rate-setting [applauded](#) their removal in the latest version. The legislative text is [here](#) and a section-by-section description is [here](#).



[How Are States Prioritizing Who Will Get the COVID-19 Vaccine First](#) – *Kaiser Family Foundation*

A new survey shows many states are following the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommendations for health care workers and long-term care residents to be the highest priority groups and receive the vaccine first, but some states are including other populations, like law enforcement, the incarcerated, and those who are homeless.



[Fauci: U.S. Could Have Herd Immunity by the End of Summer 2021](#) – *Axios*

If there's a "good uptake" of Americans choosing to vaccinate, the US could achieve herd immunity to COVID-19 by the end of next summer or fall, according to Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Dr. Anthony Fauci.



[FDA Authorizes First Over-the-Counter, Non-Prescription Covid-19 Test System for Home Use](#) – *CNN*

Anyone over 18 can buy the COVID-19 kit to collect nasal swab samples at home and receive results by phone or through a healthcare provider one to two days after the samples are received by their lab.



[Department of Health and Human Services Proposes Modifications to HIPAA Privacy Rule to Support Transition to Value-Based Care](#) – *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*

HHS proposes changes to allow permissible disclosures of protected health information to support moving from fee-for-service to value-based care payments.



[Trump Administration Finalizes Permanent Expansion of Medicare Telehealth Services and Improved Payment for Time Doctors Spend with Patients](#) – *Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services*

In its annual Physician Fee Schedule, CMS announces permanent expansions to the telehealth services covered by Medicare and increases payments for evaluation and management visits.



[Biden Picks Xavier Becerra to Lead Health and Human Services](#) – *The New York Times*

In naming former Congressman Xavier Becerra, President-elect Joe Biden names the first Latino to run the department.



[To Rebuild CDC, Biden Picks Rochelle Walensky](#) – *Politico*

Sources say President-Elect Joe Biden is tapping Rochelle Walensky, Chief of Infectious Diseases at Massachusetts General Hospital, professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, and HIV and AIDS expert, to run the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

International Health Care News

HealthAffairs

[Income-Related Inequality in Affordability and Access to Primary Care in Eleven High-Income Countries](#) – *Health Affairs*

Using 2020 Commonwealth Fund data, researchers find low-income Americans "were far more likely than those in the other high-income nations to go without needed health care because of costs, to face medical bill burdens, and to struggle to afford basic necessities such as housing and healthy food."



World Health
Organization

[World Health Organization Reveals Leading Causes of Death and Disability Worldwide: 2000-2019](#) – *World Health Organization*

Almost 75% of the world's deaths last year were from non-communicable diseases like heart disease, diabetes and cancer, indicating a need to do better in preventing and treating cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, and chronic respiratory diseases.

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