



## **MY JOURNEY TO GETTING THE COVID-19 VACCINE**

**By Naheed Ahmad, OD**

Last night I was finally able to get my first dose of the COVID 19 vaccine. I say finally, because I'd been trying to get it since December 11 2020, when the US FDA issued its first emergency use authorization for the vaccine for individuals 16 years and older. Every time I was given a link, or a lead on where the vaccine was available, there were no appointments available. The only instructions were to check back later, or next week, or in one case the website said, "We are not sure when vaccine doses will be available."

Finally, last Sunday morning I got an email from an AACO board member who also lives in the greater Atlanta area. Dr. Nikil Patel sent us another lead on a hospital system that was offering vaccine doses to health care workers not affiliated with the hospital. He sent the email out to the GOAnet email list, so most of the ODs in Georgia should have gotten the email.

I immediately went on the website and was able to get myself a 6:15pm appointment at a location closet to where I live. I checked and rechecked my confirmation email multiple times to make sure I really did have a valid appointment.

That evening I drove to the hospital center, parked, stopped to get screened in at the door and went up to the office where they were giving the vaccine doses. I checked in with no problems, since I actually bothered to read the fine print and brought all the required documents. After checking me in, I was directed to a waiting area and only managed to read 1 page of the book I am presently engrossed in, before the nurse called me into the exam room. Less than 3 minutes later, I had received my 1<sup>st</sup> dose of the COVID 19 vaccine.

At this point, many may ask, "What were your side effects?" Other than a sore arm the next day, I really had no side effects. I've been asked by friends and patients alike, if I was anxious about getting the vaccine. Did I trust the vaccine since it was brought to market so quickly and is a new science?

For various reasons, my honest answer is no. The first is that my 2 daughters and my son in law, all physicians had already gotten both doses with minimal side effects. Most of the adults in my family are in health care and none of us had any apprehension of this vaccine. The second is

that my undergraduate degree was in Microbiology & Immunology. This type of vaccine was being talked about in the late 1980s and was being researched in the 1990s. It's really not a new science, and it's actually not even a new microorganism. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are known to cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

I'm actually excited that I was able to get the vaccine and have already scheduled my next dose, which should be in less than 3 weeks. Hopefully, my 2<sup>nd</sup> dose will only have a sore arm for the side effect.