TO: Vermont Health Care Providers and Health Care Facilities
FROM: Jennifer S. Read, MD, FIDSA; Medical Epidemiologist

Updated Recommendations for the Use of the Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) COVID-19 Vaccine

The Health Advisory issued on March 24, 2021 provided initial recommendations for the use of the Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) COVID-19 vaccine, and noted the emergency use authorization (EUA) from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for the use of this vaccine on February 27, 2021. The Health Advisory issued on April 13, 2021 addressed reports of cerebral venous sinus thrombosis with thrombocytopenia after receipt of this vaccine. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) met to review data regarding this new syndrome (thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome, TTS) and to develop updated recommendations for the use of this vaccine – all reviewed in a Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report on April 27, 2021. This Health Update summarizes the new recommendations from the ACIP regarding the use of the Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) COVID-19 vaccine.

The ACIP concluded that the single-dose Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) COVID-19 vaccine is highly effective and represents a flexible tool for the prevention of COVID-19 that could be useful in communities with not only increasing incidence of COVID-19 but also variants of the etiologic agent of COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2). Limiting the use of this vaccine or making this vaccine no longer available would likely be associated with adverse consequences including limiting personal choice, disproportionately affecting populations with barriers to vaccine access or who have difficulty with returning for a second dose, and excess COVID-19 cases and deaths. Therefore, based on such risk-benefit analyses, **the ACIP recommended the continued use of the Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) COVID-19 vaccine in all persons aged 18 years or older.** The importance of education for vaccination providers and the public, especially women aged 18-49 years old, concerning the risk for TTS and the availability of other COVID-19 vaccines was emphasized.

Treatment for TTS following receipt of the Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) COVID-19 vaccine differs from treatment usually administered for blood clots, i.e., heparin should not be administered. Consultation with a specialist in hematology is recommended. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has added a warning to the EUA and fact sheets for the Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) COVID-19 vaccine regarding the rare clotting events that have occurred among vaccine recipients.

REQUESTED ACTIONS:

1. Be aware of the updated recommendations for the use of the Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) COVID-19 vaccine.

2. Ensure you are providing patients with the correct version of the Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) EUA factsheet, which was updated on April 23, 2021.

3. Be prepared to recognize and manage TTS in persons who have received the Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) COVID-19 vaccine in consultation with a specialist in hematology.

4. Report adverse events to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS).

If you have any questions, please contact the HAN Coordinator at 802-859-5900 or vthan@vermont.gov.

HAN Message Type Definitions
Health Alert: Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.
Health Advisory: Provides important information for a specific incident or situation may not require immediate action.
Health Update: Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.
Info Service Message: Provides general correspondence from VDH, which is not necessarily considered to be of an emergent nature.