

RetireSafe

Standing Up for America's Seniors!

RetireSafe FDA Vaccine Committee Comment Letter

With several vaccine approvals anticipated in the coming months, the United States is at a crossroads in our nation's fight against COVID-19. And, as unarguably one of the most vulnerable populations in regard to adverse health outcomes stemming from the pandemic, seniors must be one of the primary focuses in any discussion regarding vaccines, their distribution, or how they will be administered. Moreover, RetireSafe has a long history advocating for the health of older Americans. As a grassroots, non-profit organization, RetireSafe's mission is to educate and support the cause of mature Americans on issues including Social Security, Medicare, health, safe retirement, and financial well-being.

On behalf of the over 70 million Americans across the country, as well as the members of RetireSafe, we urge the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to prioritize the consideration of differing vaccine delivery options beyond traditional injectables. Furthermore, the development of a safe and effective oral COVID-19 vaccine would hold immense benefits for America's seniors and retirees.

We believe offering a vaccine in pill form, along with deploying other successful treatments, could maximize the number of Americans that will ultimately be vaccinated, especially among seniors who might currently be hesitant to take, or would struggle to access, a vaccine. In fact, a recent poll of RetireSafe's members across the country found that respondents preferred an oral COVID-19 vaccine option over a traditional injection by more than a 10% margin.

A recent Fox News poll noted: "17% of respondents said they are unsure about getting the flu shot" because they are "concerned about potential exposure to COVID-19 if they go out to get vaccinated." This number is even higher among America's older population, and our own poll highlighted that just 43% of our members have received the flu shot this year. We also found that an astonishing 64% of our members are currently in self-quarantine, while 84% are avoiding crowds during the pandemic.

If these eye-opening results are true for the annual flu, it is clear that we will need further vaccine options that afford individuals flexibility, while also allowing them to prioritize the health and safety of their families. The successful development of an oral COVID-19 vaccine could potentially allow seniors with compromised immune systems, those who fear leaving their homes during the pandemic, and those with other vulnerabilities or mobility difficulties to receive their vaccine dose in the comfort and safety of their homes. All of this, on top of the fact that oral vaccines also reduce the possibility of increased exposure to the virus through an injection at a medical facility.

In addition, oral options could promote more equitable vaccine distribution and eliminate rationing. If history is any indicator, America's most at-risk patients and seniors could be placed at the back of the line if these strategies are enforced at any point. As such, RetireSafe urges the FDA to consider and expedite the review of diverse vaccine options that allow seniors and other

threatened groups to decide which vaccination delivery method is best for them, while boosting the number of Americans who are willing and able to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. The pandemic has shown that this is even more critical given the virus's proven, disproportionately adverse effects on seniors and retirees.