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**MUSC Black and Hispanic/Latino faculty urge communities of color to take the COVID-19 vaccine**

**CHARLESTON, S.C. (Jan. 13, 2021)** – Given the devastating impact of the COVID-19 virus on communities of color, the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) Black Faculty Group (BFG) and the MUSC Hispanic/Latino faculty encourage Blacks and Hispanics/Latinos in South Carolina and across the nation to take the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as they can schedule an appointment.

“Our lives depend on it,” said Marvella E. Ford, Ph.D., professor in the Department of Public Health Sciences, and director, Population Sciences and Cancer Disparities at the MUSC Hollings Cancer Center. A leader of the MUSC BFG for nearly 16 years, Ford stated the group’s perspective, noting that “The vaccine is needed in these communities for three reasons. First, COVID-19 has caused more deaths in the United States than in any other country in the world. Second, COVID-19 infection rates are much higher among Blacks and Hispanics/Latinos than among Whites. Third, COVID-19 death rates among Blacks are double in comparison to the death rates among Whites.”

Due to many systemic stressors such as employment issues, lack of health insurance, racism, and discrimination, many Blacks and Hispanics/Latinos were in poorer health than Whites long before the pandemic began. Unfortunately, chronic health conditions, like diabetes and heart disease, place Blacks and Hispanics/Latinos at greater risk of experiencing more severe COVID-19 symptoms once infected.

“The vaccine gives us a measure of hope,” said James H. Tolley, M.D., MUSC Assistant Professor Emeritus, Emergency Medicine. “This hope translates into children being raised by their parents instead of other family members or the foster care system; grandparents living to see their grandchildren graduating; parents being present during their children’s weddings; and uncles and aunts being available to provide advice and guidance to their nieces and nephews.” A former emergency department physician, Tolley has been part of the MUSC community for more than 30 years.

The COVID-19 vaccines that are now available were developed with tens of thousands of volunteers who participated in clinical trials across the nation and around the world. Many of the trial participants were racially and ethnically diverse and the trials used the most sophisticated and scientifically rigorous methodologies. The vaccines are safe and highly effective at protecting against the most severe consequences of the virus.

COVID-19 vaccines, like all vaccines, undergo very rigorous testing and safety assessments before the federal Food and Drug Administration approves their use. Close safety monitoring continues even after a vaccine obtains FDA approval.

“The stakes are high,” Ford said. “If there is not significant uptake of the vaccine in our communities, members of these communities will continue to die in large numbers from this deadly disease. The people who are dying represent a tremendous loss to their families, their communities, and to the United States.”

Established in 2004, the MUSC Black Faculty Group includes educators, administrators, health care providers, researchers and staff members who work in all areas of the institution. The MUSC Hispanic/Latino Faculty embrace a similar broad variety of members who serve in education, research and health care careers. The two groups have created a professional network that addresses and supports a variety of community initiatives.

**Top 10 Reasons We Ask People of Color to Get the COVID-19 Vaccine**

1. **People of color are at higher risk of getting COVID-19, going to the hospital, and dying from COVID-19.**
2. **In clinical trials with thousands of people of color, COVID-19 vaccines reduced the risk of getting COVID-19 and reduced getting a severe case of it.**
3. **The vaccines have been scientifically proven to be up to 95% effective against the virus.**
4. **COVID-19 vaccines are safe for people of color. More than 10,000 people of color have received the vaccines.**
5. **Many measures are in place to make sure the COVID-19 vaccines continue to be safe for people of color.**
6. **Doctors and nurses of color at MUSC Health and across the U.S. believe that the COVID-19 vaccine is safe and effective.**
7. **You cannot get COVID-19 from the COVID-19 vaccines.**
8. **Side effects can occur after getting a COVID-19 vaccine. These side effects are often mild. They often go away in a few days.**
9. **Getting a COVID-19 vaccine will help you to protect yourself, your family, and your community from the harmful effects of COVID-19.**
10. **MUSC Health and other health systems across the country have pledged to give out the COVID-19 vaccine fairly and equitably.**

**Resources**

**Information about the COVID-19 Vaccine and COVID-19 Testing**

* **South Carolina DHEC**
* <https://scdhec.gov/covid19/covid-19-vaccination/covid-19-vaccine-faqs>
* **MUSC Health**
  + <https://muschealth.org/patients-visitors/coronavirus-information/covid-vaccine>

**Information about the COVID-19 Vaccine**

* **U.S. Food & Drug Administration**
  + <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/covid-19-vaccines>
* **National Institutes of Health**
  + <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/promising-interim-results-clinical-trial-nih-moderna-covid-19-vaccine>
* <https://www.modernatx.com/sites/default/files/content_documents/2020-COVE-Study-Enrollment-Completion-10.22.20.pdf>

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**About the Medical University of South Carolina**

Founded in 1824 in Charleston, MUSC is the oldest medical school in the South as well as the state’s only integrated academic health sciences center with a unique charge to serve the state through education, research and patient care. Each year, MUSC educates and trains more than 3,000 students and nearly 800 residents in six colleges: Dental Medicine, Graduate Studies, Health Professions, Medicine, Nursing and Pharmacy. The state’s leader in obtaining biomedical research funds, in fiscal year 2019, MUSC set a new high, bringing in more than $284 million. For information on academic programs, visit [musc.edu](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=http-3A__www.musc.edu_&d=DwMGaQ&c=rKcR87XD2bn3vfHr9ZGyMg&r=KLMpR9kmiF2gRbNwT55BNmk8RzAXto_knYeafMstp-I&m=m60UPyZFwL8OrFpiqPoWebsjSrLq5qEoFqePkvA3Sgg&s=mZIUoASMVepr4S1HAbMBneTXlgUyxVAEF8ogiuH_zhs&e=).

As the clinical health system of the Medical University of South Carolina, MUSC Health is dedicated to delivering the highest quality patient care available while training generations of competent, compassionate health care providers to serve the people of South Carolina and beyond. Comprising some 1,600 beds, more than 100 outreach sites, the MUSC College of Medicine, the physicians’ practice plan and nearly 325 telehealth locations, MUSC Health owns and operates eight hospitals situated in Charleston, Chester, Florence, Lancaster and Marion counties. In 2020, for the sixth consecutive year, U.S. News & World Report named MUSC Health the No. 1 hospital in South Carolina. To learn more about clinical patient services, visit [muschealth.org](http://muschealth.org).

MUSC and its affiliates have collective annual budgets of $3.2 billion. The more than 17,000 MUSC team members include world-class faculty, physicians, specialty providers and scientists who deliver groundbreaking education, research, technology and patient care.