Vaccine Q&A Video Transcript

Seth: My name is Seth Cowan. I'm a Family Nurse Practitioner at Skagit Family Health Clinic, here in Mount Vernon.

Michelle: My name is Michelle Antonich. I'm a Primary Care Provider and Naturopathic Doctor at Skagit Family Health Clinic.

Chris: Hi, I'm Chris Johnston. I'm the Chief Administrative Officer at Peace Health United General Medical Center and I'm also a pharmacist.

Q: Is there a vaccine for COVID currently available?

Seth: There are currently two vaccines that have been approved and recommended for prevention of COVID-19. One is from Pfizer-BioNTech and the other is Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine.

Q: How are the vaccines developed, tested, and approved?

Chris: The vaccine itself goes through many safety measures and is rigorously tested before it actually comes to market. It goes through three different phases. The first phase takes a small group of individuals where they get a test dose of the medication. And this initial phase is to determine whether the medication is even safe to give to a larger number. Once that has been determined that it's safe to give to other individuals, they go to what's called phase 2 testing. This takes a much larger population base – upwards of in the thousands – and it looks at different demographics, different age groups, and they look at different dosages to see which one will be most effective. Again, they are also looking at different reactions and determining the safety of the medication as they go through this testing. The final phase of testing involves tens of thousands of people, and this occurred with both vaccines that are on the market today, where they take the medication, they fine-tune the dosing, and continue to re-evaluate the safety of the vaccine. This is done over a period of time and once all this information is done by the drug manufacturers, it's then gone back to the FDA where they review the material and then get final authorization for the vaccine to go to market and be available to the general public.

Q: What's it actually mean when people talk about EUA?

Chris: The FDA uses the term EUA for an Emergency Use Authorization. In the event that there's a public health emergency, they have this tool that enables them to facilitate the development of certain medications – and in this case a vaccine – to come to market in a much more timely manner to help with the public health emergency.

Q: I heard that there is a vaccine now - so when can I get vaccinated?

Michelle: That's a great question. Right now, the vaccine has been approved – two of them – and phase 1a are high-risk health workers and people who live in

long-term care facilities. And then we're going to go through phases progressively based on who's most at risk. So if you are of average risk, probably in a few months we're hoping that everyone will have access to the vaccine.

Q: When it does become available, I would like to know if my kids could be vaccinated?

Michelle: Children currently are not able to get vaccinated against COVID-19. Thankfully children are low risk from having complications of the disease. The Pfizer vaccine is authorized in use for 16 years old and up, so when it's available generally 16 and 17 year olds will be able to get it. And there are studies underway currently for children; so hopefully by the end of the year – maybe fall of 2021 – children will be able to be vaccinated as well.

Q: Where will I be able to get vaccinated?

Michelle: When you're eligible to get the vaccine, you'll probably be able to get the vaccine from your primary care clinic. You also will be able to get it through pharmacies and possibly through the Department of Health drive-thru site.

Q: I'd actually like to know how much this is going to cost me?

Michelle: Well the vaccine itself is covered by the federal government. The cost of the administration will be covered at 100 percent if you have private insurance, Medicare, or Medicaid. And the government is coming out with recommendations that for people who have no insurance that it will be free to them as well.

Q: I've heard that I'll need two doses – why is that?

Michelle: The coronavirus vaccine does require two doses. This is true for virtually all vaccines. The first dose starts your immune response and in order to get a long-term response that has high enough antibodies to protect you from the disease and to protect you from spreading the disease to other people, it requires two doses – one that builds on the first one.

Q: I'd like to know what common side effects have been reported?

Seth: The common side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine include pain and swelling of the injection site - and this is very common for most vaccines. Other common side effects that have been reported are fever chills, headache, and fatigue. These typically resolve in 24 to 48 hours. It's important to remember that these are not necessarily a bad thing – although not fun to go through – they are indication that your immune system is responding to the vaccine, helping to protect you from that disease.

Q: Once I get vaccinated, do I still have to wear a mask?

Chris: Unfortunately masking will still be necessary, even after you have you've been vaccinated. While the vaccine will protect you against the illness of COVID, it will not protect others. We're still learning a lot about the virus and the vaccine and we believe that people are potentially carriers, even though they still may be vaccinated. So masking will be important for you to protect others around you.

Q: Will a vaccine end the pandemic?

Chris: The vaccine is about one of many tools that will help end the pandemic. Even once you're vaccinated, we will still need to utilize masking precautions, hand washing, and social distancing. It will be a combination of all these activities that will help end the pandemic.