The American Association for Cancer Research Urges COVID-19 Vaccine Boosters for Cancer Caregivers

The AACR asks the CDC to recommend COVID-1i9 vaccine boosters for cancer caregivers as well as anyone who lives with someone with cancer.

October 21, 2021 By American Association for Cancer Research

The American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) sent a letter to U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Rochelle Walensky, MD, MPH, encouraging the agency to recommend booster shots of the various COVID-19 vaccines for caregivers and other people who share a home with cancer patients.

Signed by AACR President David A. Tuveson, MD, PhD, FAACR, Past President Antoni Ribas, MD, PhD, FAACR, and CEO Margaret Foti, PhD, MD (hc), the letter thanks Walensky for including patients with cancer and the healthcare professionals who care for them in previous rounds of booster recommendations. However, for many of these patients, residing in a home where other members or caregivers may not be eligible for COVID-19 boosters is still a threat to their health.

Patients with cancer and survivors of cancer often have weakened immune systems that put them at higher risk for severe disease and death from COVID-19. Several studies have demonstrated that some cancer patients, especially those with hematologic malignancies, may not respond as well as healthy individuals to the vaccines and therefore need additional means of protection against the virus. Providing boosters to household members and caregivers will help to provide this protection. General Colin Powell's death sadly underscores the urgency to take such actions to reduce the risk that patients with cancer face from COVID-19. Reports indicate that Powell had multiple myeloma, a type of blood cancer that suppresses the body's immune response.

The letter's recommendations were based on a recent article in the AACR journal Blood Cancer Discovery that outlined a comprehensive approach to maximizing the protection of patients with hematologic malignancies from COVID-19.

The AACR sent the letter in advance of the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) meeting on October 21, where members will discuss booster recommendations for people who received the Moderna and Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) vaccines.

Read the full letter.

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