

April Bonus Maverick Minute with Jane Meza

Hello, I'm Jeff Gold, and welcome to this Maverick Minute

[GOLD]

My guest today is Dr. Jane Meza, and as I'm sure our audience knows, Dr. Meza is the executive director of our office of health security, and we have a number of important announcements to repeat, and of course, share some new information today. Dr. Meza thanks so much for being with us today.

[MEZA]

Thank you.

[GOLD]

So let's start off with what's new and different. And I understand that in the very near future we're going to be offering a trial of a new vaccine protocol to the UNO student body, it's called "Prevent COVID U," and maybe you could tell our audience a little bit about what the trial is, how it's going to be conducted, and of course, hopefully we can get to which students would be eligible to participate.

[MEZA]

Yes so it's really exciting, UNO is one of 20 universities around the country that were selected to participate in the Prevent COVID U vaccine clinical trial, and the purpose of the trial is to further study how the Moderna vaccine can prevent COVID infection, and it's a really great partnership with Children's Hospital and UNMC. We're working closely with Dr. [FIRST NAME] McCullough at UNMC to offer this vaccine clinical trial to students at UNO. The trial itself is actually available now. Students can go to the Prevent COVID U dot org website to learn more information. We also sent out an email last week to students to let them know about the availability of the clinical trial. And the way the trial works is that it's open to UNO students age 19 to 26, and students are randomized to receive the Moderna vaccine either first or after a few months. And one of the really nice things is that students know which arm they're on, whether they're going to get the Moderna vaccine first or whether they're going to get it after a few months, and then to participate in the trial they would take daily nasal swabs that they can do right at home, then they would just need to come into the UNO Scott Conference Center to get a nasal swab test through PCR. So we're really excited about it because it's yet another opportunity for our UNO community to receive the vaccine but it's also a way for us to help to participate in further research about COVID.

[GOLD]

So as I understand Dr. Meza, and hopefully our audience knows as well, that the Moderna and the Pfizer vaccines both received Food and Drug Administration emergency use authorization back in December, they've been widely used across the nation very successfully to prevent COVID and very safely to prevent COVID. They're 95 and 94 percent effective respectively, so this is a clinical trial, but it's not a clinical trial in the sense of safety and efficacy of the vaccine, it's a clinical trial in the sense of the impact of college students and the ability to carry and transmit the coronavirus, would that be an accurate description?

[MEZA]

That's correct, and that's why it's really important that people who participate in the trial are able to do those daily nasal swabs and come and get tested twice a week at the Scott Conference Center so we can better study the infection ... and the use of the vaccine in preventing the vaccine for the college age population.

[GOLD]

And during the trial either early on or later all of the students enrolled will get the full dose of vaccines is that correct also?

[MEZA]

That's correct, everyone will get the vaccine. They'll either get it early when they enroll or they'll get it after a few months depending on which arm they are randomized to, and again, they'll know right when they have their first visit, they will know which arm they are going to be randomized to, so it's helpful to have that information right away.

[GOLD]

So it's really good news now because over 30 percent of eligible Nebraskans have received at least their first dose of vaccine – a very healthy number have received their second dose of vaccine, but you know let's just take a minute Dr. Meza and remind everybody that the vaccine is not a passport, it's not a free pass to do anything and everything that you might have wanted to do previously, and things such as using masks, social distancing, etc., not gathering in groups, all very important to remember that those are critical aspects as we move forward at least during the next several months.

[MEZA]

Absolutely, the way we're viewing the vaccines is that we really want to encourage everyone to get a vaccine and remember that it's one of our tools in our toolbox for preventing COVID as you mentioned

[GOLD]

Well, I want to thank you again Dr. Meza not just for joining us today on Maverick Minute, but for all of the things you've done over the last year. Your influence, your judgement, your kindness has been absolutely essential to having UNO on this journey of safety and wellness, and it's what's allowing us to bring people back to campus safely, back to athletic events, classrooms, teaching labs, concerts, and so many other things that make our university environment so rich and so successful.

[MEZA]

Thank you very much, and we're working closely with the campus with individuals if they want to schedule a time just to talk with us about what it is they are looking to do, we work with them and help them create a plan so that we can do it safely

[GOLD]

Okay, we have to all remember, Prevent COVID U, I love the idea.

[MEZA]

Thank you, me too.

[GOLD]

Thanks so much for being with us today and thank you for joining us on this Maverick Minute.