

Banner Health | Nancy Zismann

So we started vaccinating on December 17, and late that day, we were told that some of the sites across the country were noticing that there was leftover in the vial. So we waited for the CDC and Pfizer to come out with guidance. The very next day, on December 18, we were able to start drawing up that sixth dose and using it.

The big question then remained was is Pfizer going to continue to send the syringes with each kit? Can you talk to me a little bit about that? Was that the question at that point?

Yeah, so when our kits came in, they came in with the VanishPoint syringes and then some additional syringes and needles. The VanishPoint are the low, dead space syringes. They're really easy to use. Our vaccinators like them, our pharmacists like them, and they're the ideal syringe. Each time we get a delivery of supplies, the VanishPoint syringes have been in there, so it's part of what's included in the kit, as well as others.

When you found out, what was it like for everybody who is a part of this effort to get our country vaccinated? What was it like to realize that, hey, we've got some extra supplies here now?

It was amazing, and to say that we had a 20% increase in vaccine just by virtue of using this needle and syringe was amazing. The team literally just all took a pause. And wow. We can get more vaccine from each one of these vials, and we can administer more vaccine to our community.

In this, I guess that's the idea is that you don't have to wait on supply of manufacturing like she had said. We want to make sure we get as much in here as possible. But talk about stretching supply and how critical it is not only in the medical industry and everything like that but stretching supply when you have a finite item, like vaccines. It's super critical I'm assuming to make use of everything you have.

It's true in everything we do. Nobody wants to misuse or not take full advantage of any product that we receive. Vaccine became such a precious commodity that having this ability, we've put tons of processes in place. We have a very well-trained pharmacy team. We have technicians that are monitored. They're trained. They do a great job in pulling up these extra doses. We have our teams that are administering the vaccine, taking every single precaution so that from start to finish, from drawing them up all the way to administering them, every precaution is taken to get as many vaccines in the arms as possible.

Do you feel the weight of this whole thing to not waste any dose? Do you feel the weight of the community?

There is so much riding on this being successful, and it is so important to our community. I get very emotional about this. That first day that we gave those first doses, the sense of relief that we saw and that continues today. Yesterday, half of our patients that we saw here were getting their second dose, and you could just see in a person's face the relief, the excitement knowing that they have one more layer of protection. Yes, we have to continue masking. We have to do great handwashing. We have to keep our safe distance. One more layer of protection, so important to our community, to the health of our community, and to really getting past this to the other side of this pandemic and this surge.

If we weren't getting these extra doses, if we were just getting the five and then tossing it out, would that be a shame? How would you even describe if we weren't taking advantage of that extra dose?

Yeah, that feeling that we had when we realized we could get that extra dose was so important. It would be a shame. If we weren't getting that extra dose for whatever reason, it would be a shame, and we're doing everything possible. Our pharmacies worked really hard to make sure that they're using syringes and needles that'll maximize that, get that sixth dose, making sure that we're using good safe practices, keeping everything clean and sterile, so we're not wasting.

Are you guys probably upwards of 40k doses administered here at this site?

Yeah, we're well over that.

Well, over what. What are you guys at? Do you know a rough estimate?

Oh my gosh, I just looked at those numbers. I looked at the two Banner Health pods in Maricopa County, and we were at about 78,000 between the two spots.