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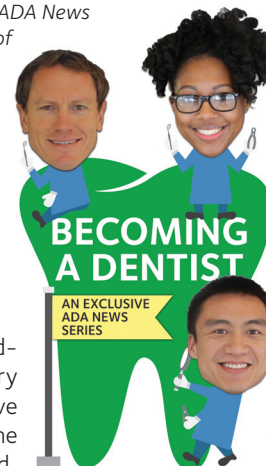
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EDUCATION

UMSOD dental students receive COVID-19 vaccines

BEN, DAN, LASHONDA AMONG THOSE PROVIDERS TO RECEIVE SHOTS

Editor's note: In November 2017, the ADA News launched Becoming a Dentist, a series of stories that follows three dental students at the University of Maryland School of Dentistry — Dan Yang, LaShonda Shepherd and Ben Horn — during their journeys to becoming dentists. See all the stories in the series at ADA.org/BeADentist.



BY JENNIFER GARVIN

Many health care providers across the country are eager to receive the COVID-19 vaccine and dental students Dan, Ben and LaShonda are no exception.

The trio of fourth-year University of Maryland School of Dentistry students — whom the ADA News has been following since their first days of school — were among those providers the university's health system helped get vaccinated. They shared their personal experiences with getting the vaccine.

"It was a very efficient process," LaShonda said. "The administration submitted the names of all patient-facing students, so we were offered the vaccine as soon as our phase was eligible. Around the end of December, I received

risk for exposure so I felt getting the vaccine was the best choice for me," she said. "Ultimately, I think the decision to get vaccinated is a personal one. I have taken countless science courses, and even I had concerns, so I sympathize with those wading through the sea of misinformation and social media experts. But, what I will say is that you owe it to yourself to do some research before deciding against it. It is not enough to speculate."

Dan agreed, saying, "I think it was super important for me to get vaccinated. I didn't do it to set an example but to be able to do my part in helping society achieve herd immunity thereby reducing transmission and illness. I just want life to become a little bit normal again."

All three students said their first shots went smoothly but that they needed recovery time following their second, as they expected.

"I got my second vaccine on a Thursday at noon and was able to work the rest of the day and even take the kids sledding that evening," Ben said. "However, by 8 that night I started to feel the chills coming on and took Tylenol and



a survey and health questionnaire. I filled it out and was sent a link to schedule an appointment. The vaccine is administered here on campus."

"The university made it super easy for us," said Dan. "I'm very thankful."

The UMSOD clinics are busy places. During the month of February, the school said an average of 200 patients were seen by the students each day.

Ben said he was relieved to receive his shots after personally experiencing COVID-19 at the end of 2020. He said he was fortunate not to experience any lingering side effects.

"My personal research showed me the risk of having COVID-19 or being re-infected with the virus outweighs any risk the vaccine may carry, and I owe it to my family, my patients and society to get the vaccine when it was offered to me," Ben said.

"COVID is here to stay," he added.

LaShonda said she's hopeful the vaccines are a step toward returning to a sense of normalcy but admitted she did have concerns early on.

"I am in a profession where I am at high

went to bed. I was freezing all night despite sleeping with a hat on and fleece sweater. The next day I took more Tylenol and thought I was well enough to report to the dental school. By the time I got to Baltimore and parked, I was shaking with the chills and my energy was zapped. I parked and just sat there for about two hours before mustering up enough energy to drive home."

"I experienced some fatigue, body aches and a fairly persistent headache," LaShonda said. "I anticipated symptoms, though, so I scheduled my appointment for a Friday, and I was able to recover over the weekend. I felt fine by that Monday."

"My experience with the second dose was rough," Dan said. "I was bedridden the entire day after getting the shot. I had chills, fever, body aches, the works, but by late afternoon of the third day, it was OK."

The side effects were worth it, according to Ben.

"I feel privileged to have received the vaccine," Ben said. "I'm so thankful." ■

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