

Staff at Hospitals in DC, Texas Turn Down COVID-19 Vaccine

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Many employees at Howard University Hospital in Washington, D.C., have reservations about taking the COVID-19 vaccine, and CEO Anita Jenkins is trying to get workers to follow her lead by getting vaccinated, according to [CNN](#).

The hospital, a major healthcare provider for the Black community, received 725 doses of the Pfizer vaccine Dec. 15 and expects to receive a second shipment this week. As of Dec. 18, only about 600 of the hospital's 1,900 employees had signed up for the shots, according to [Kaiser Health News](#).

"There is a high level of mistrust and I get it," Ms. Jenkins told Kaiser Health News. "People are genuinely afraid of the vaccine."

The vaccination numbers, though low, still exceeded expectations, Ms. Jenkins told *CNN*. An internal hospital survey of about 350 employees in early November showed that 70 percent were not willing to take the COVID-19 vaccine or would not take it immediately after it became available.

Ms. Jenkins received the shot Dec. 15 in hopes of inspiring staff to get vaccinated. She's part of a widespread effort by healthcare experts and community leaders to combat vaccine hesitancy among Black Americans. About 35 percent of Black Americans said they probably or definitely would not get the vaccine if it was determined to be safe by scientists and widely available for free, according to a Kaiser Family Foundation study cited by *CNN*.

Howard University Hospital isn't the only healthcare provider with workers who turned down the vaccine. At Doctors Hospital at Renaissance in Edinburg, Texas, so many workers declined the COVID-19 vaccine that the hospital offered doses to other medical workers in the region, according to [ProPublica](#).

The hospital received 5,850 doses of the vaccine, and it quickly became clear that not enough people eligible for the vaccine, like staff who work directly with COVID-19 patients, were opting to get it, DHR Health CMO Robert Martinez, MD, told *ProPublica*.

"You start to see similar numbers across the country, all this mistrust and misinformation," Dr. Martinez said.

After the first day of distribution, DHR reached out to other hospitals and healthcare facilities in the region to offer doses of the vaccine. *ProPublica* reported that the vaccine ended up going to non-medical personnel as well, including state Sen. Eddie Lucio Jr. He told *ProPublica* he was invited to take the vaccine by DHR after officials explained to him that all eligible workers who wanted the vaccine received it.

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