

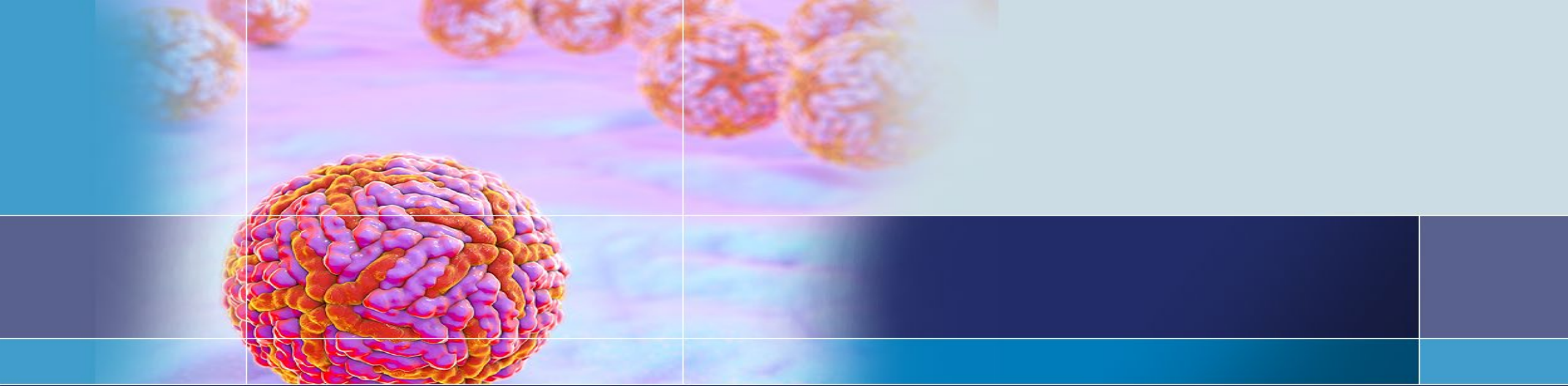
# COVID-19 Joint Information Center (JIC) Lessons Learned

OFFICE of Counterterrorism and Emerging Threats (OCET)

April L. Finnen, MBA (she/her)  
FDA COVID-19 JIC Section Chief  
July 15, 2022

## **Disclaimer:**

This presentation represents my personal opinion, and does not necessarily reflect the position of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the Department of Health and Human Services, or the U.S. Government.



# What is a JIC?

# JIC 101

- JIC is part of an Incident Management Group (IMG)
- IMG and JIC are part of the Incident Command System (ICS) emergency response framework

The FDA JIC monitors and assesses the need for and effectiveness of public messaging regarding the incident and FDA's response.

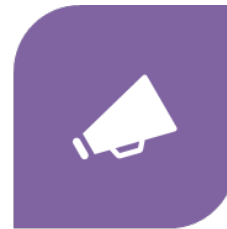
# JIC roles



**CREATE /  
COORDINATE**



**CLEAR**

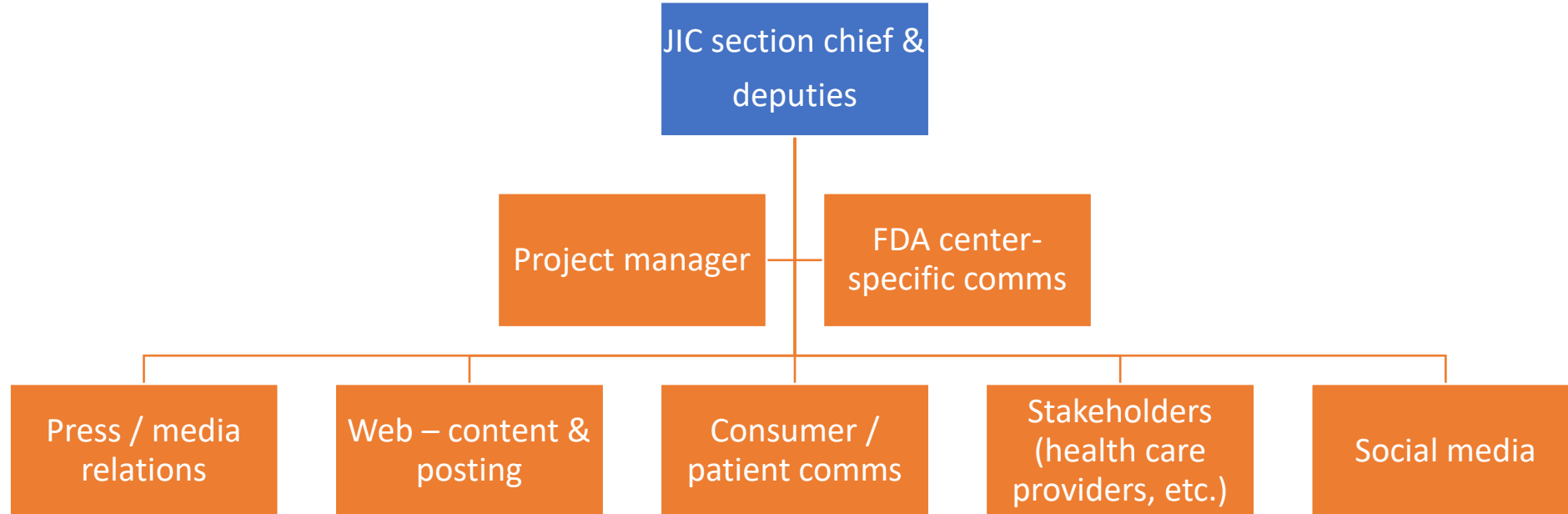


**PUBLISH /  
AMPLIFY**



**DOCUMENT**

# JIC structure for external comms



# Publications

- 475+ COVID-19-related FDA web pages
- 400+ COVID-19 press releases (English/Spanish)
- 120+ weekly MCMi email updates (+hundreds more stakeholder emails)
- 60+ videos
- 30+ COVID-19 consumer updates & podcasts
- Thousands of tweets

**Including many consumer comms  
available in multiple languages**





# Lessons



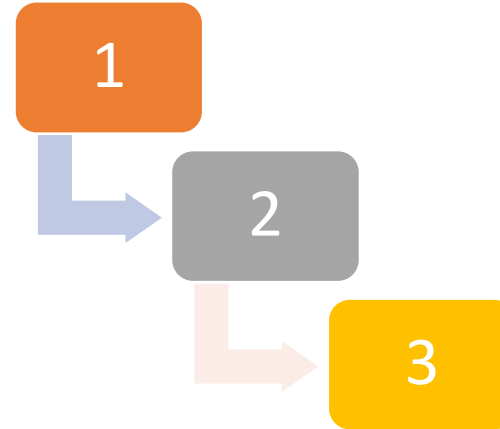
# A few things... so far

1. You need a process
2. “Who needs to know?”
3. Break the silos
4. Post FAQs publicly, and quickly (+ update often)
5. Use plain language
6. Don’t get lost in translation
7. Team up
8. Everyone needs a backup



# 1. You need a process

- Processes you may need:
  - Requesting clearance of comms
  - Keeping leadership informed (sitreps)
  - Sharing meeting notes & tracking action items
- Must:
  - Be faster than “business as usual”
  - Allow real-time editing by multiple people (vs. stepwise)
  - Build in flexibility
  - Periodically re-evaluate the frequency and need for meetings and sitreps
- Be willing to change things that aren’t working



**Document processes and share widely...**  
**but don't assume people will read**

## 2. “Who needs to know?”

- More people than you think
- If one office/person is getting the question, several others likely are too
- Loop everyone in, so you all respond the same way and can more easily and efficiently **share the same messages**
- If possible, refer to posted FAQs...



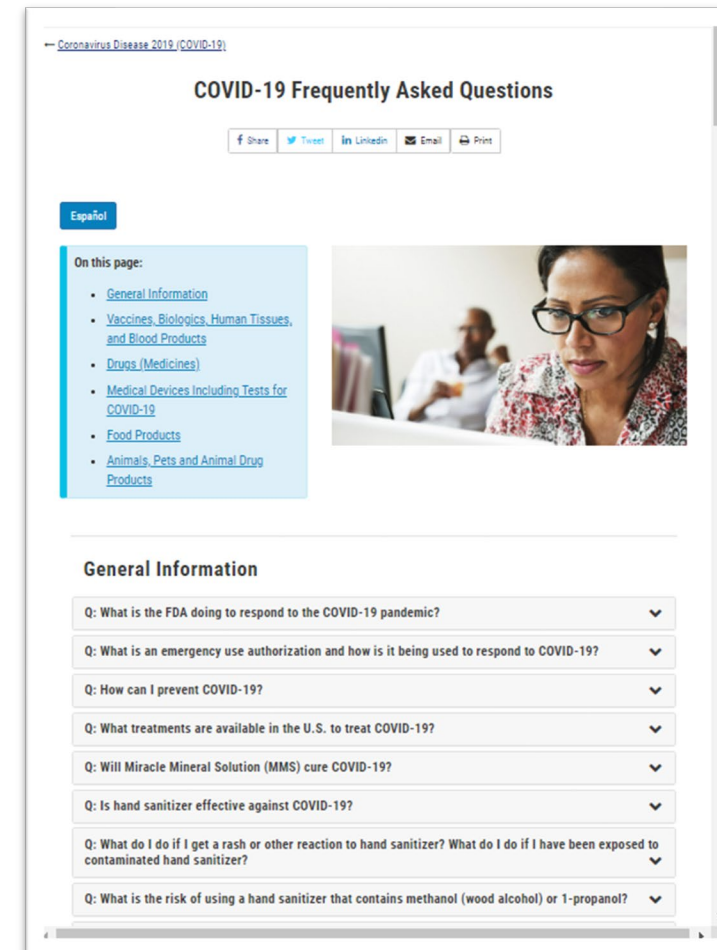
# 3. Break the silos

- **Consistency** helps
  - FDA's JIC met every day for many months
  - Sitreps/reporting often (as things happen)
  - Just keep showing up
- Make **sharing** what's coming the norm
  - Minimize surprises
  - Help others help you spread the word

# 4. FAQs

- Post frequently asked questions (FAQs) on your website as soon as possible
  - Info may be incomplete. Don't wait.
- **Update / add new questions often**
  - A process can help with this, if multiple clearances required
- Monitor for new “hot topics”
  - Consumer/patient inquiries
    - What are patients asking?
  - Call centers/phone calls
  - Social media
  - Press questions/articles
  - Stakeholder inquiries
  - Misinformation
  - +share this info w/ others @ JIC meetings
- Archive outdated or obsolete questions

## COVID-19 FAQs from FDA



## 5. Use plain language

- Regulatory terminology is not always “Google-friendly”
- What are people typing in a search engine to find the information?
  - Use those words in your web pages to help people find the correct info
- Test messages with patients/consumers
  - If not possible during the initial response, refer to research from previous public health emergencies
- Sometimes it helps to **sound more human...**





Image [shared](#) by the University of  
Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS)  
[Center for Health Literacy](#)

## Coronavirus Testing Basics

You've probably heard a lot about coronavirus testing recently. If you think you have coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and need a test, contact your health care provider immediately. The FDA has been working around the clock to increase the availability of critical medical products, including tests for the coronavirus, to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. Learn more about the different types of tests and the steps involved.

There are two different types of tests – **diagnostic tests** and **antibody tests**.

 A **diagnostic test** can show if you have an active coronavirus infection and should take steps to quarantine or isolate yourself from others. Currently there are two types of diagnostic tests – **molecular (RT-PCR) tests** that detect the virus's genetic material, and **antigen tests** that detect specific proteins on the surface of the virus.

 An **antibody test** looks for antibodies that are made by the immune system in response to a threat, such as a specific virus. Antibodies can help fight infections. Antibodies can take several days or weeks to develop after you have an infection and may stay in your blood for several weeks after recovery. Because of this, antibody tests should not be used to diagnose an active coronavirus infection. At this time researchers do not know if the presence of antibodies means that you are immune to the coronavirus in the future.

	MOLECULAR TEST	ANTIGEN TEST	ANTIBODY TEST
<b>Also known as...</b>	Diagnostic test, viral test, molecular test, nucleic acid amplification tests (NAAT), RT-PCR tests	Rapid diagnostic test*	Serological test, serology, blood test, serology test
<b>How the sample is taken...</b>	Nasal or throat swab (most tests) Saliva (a few tests)	Nasal or throat swab	Finger stick or blood draw
<b>How long it takes to get results...</b>	Same day (some locations) or up to a week	One hour or less	Same day (many locations) or 1-3 days
<b>Is another test needed...</b>	This test is typically highly accurate and usually does not need to be repeated.	Positive results are usually highly accurate but negative results may need to be confirmed with a molecular test.	Sometimes a second antibody test is needed for accurate results.
<b>What it shows...</b>	Diagnoses active coronavirus infection	Diagnoses active coronavirus infection	Shows if you've been infected by coronavirus in the past
<b>What it can't do...</b>	Show if you ever had COVID-19 or were infected with the coronavirus in the past	Definitively rule out active coronavirus infection. Antigen tests are more likely to miss an active coronavirus infection compared to molecular tests. Your health care provider may order a molecular test if your antigen test shows a negative result but you have symptoms of COVID-19.	Diagnose active coronavirus infection at the time of the test or show that you do not have COVID-19

\*Some molecular tests are also rapid tests.

## Coronavirus Testing Basics

You've probably heard a lot about coronavirus testing recently. If you think you have coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and need a test, contact your health care provider immediately. The FDA has been working around the clock to increase the availability of critical medical products, including tests for the coronavirus, to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. Learn more about the different types of tests and the steps involved.

There are two different types of tests – **diagnostic tests** and **antibody tests**.



A **diagnostic test** can show if you have an active coronavirus infection and should take steps to quarantine or isolate yourself from others. Currently there are two types of diagnostic tests – **molecular (RT-PCR) tests** that detect the virus's genetic material, and **antigen tests** that detect specific proteins on the surface of the virus.

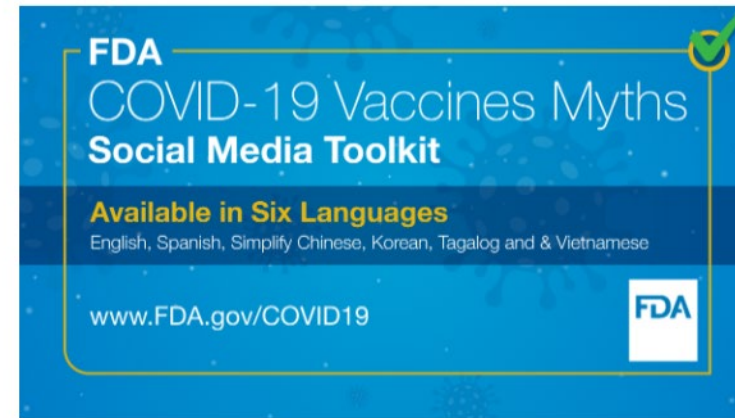


An **antibody test** looks for antibodies that are made by the immune system in response to a threat, such as a specific virus. Antibodies can help fight infections. Antibodies can take several days or weeks to develop after you have an infection and may stay in your blood for several weeks after recovery. Because of this, antibody tests should not be used to diagnose an active coronavirus infection. At this time researchers do not know if the presence of antibodies means that you are immune to the coronavirus in the future.



## 6. Don't get lost in translation

- Have a plan for translating consumer materials ... and keeping them updated
  - Who will manage & proofread translations?
  - What languages are needed?
  - How can you sustain & promote translations?
- Constraints
  - Budget
  - Staff / outsourcing
  - Frequent updates



## 7. Team up

- Pandemic response is a team effort
- **Work with stakeholders** who share your goals
  - Government agencies at all levels
  - Medical associations
  - Patient groups
  - Elected representatives
  - Minority health & community organizations
- Amplify key messages
  - HHS We Can Do This campaign
  - Regular email updates
  - FDA multilingual social media [toolkits](#)



<https://wecandothis.hhs.gov/>

# 8. Backup

- You are not alone
- No one can be “on” all the time
- Rest and self care is important
  - The news firehose can be brutal
- To be consistent—without burning people out—every person on the JIC needs at least one backup
  - At peak, FDA JIC lead had 3 deputies and a project manager ... and all of us were needed to cover multiple simultaneous calls





# Resources



# Resources

# Incident command & crisis comms training

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
  - Crisis & Emergency Risk Communication ([CERC](#))
    - “The right message at the right time from the right person can save lives. ”
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
  - IS-100.C: Introduction to the Incident Command System, [ICS 100](#)
  - IS-200.C: Basic Incident Command System for Initial Response, [ICS-200](#)
  - IS-29.A: Public Information Officer Awareness ([IS0029](#))
- World Health Organization (WHO)
  - Communicating risk in public health emergencies ([guideline](#))
- European Medicines Agency (EMA)
  - EMA [plan](#) for emerging health threats (including communication)



## WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT COVID Variants



### There are several variants of the virus that causes COVID

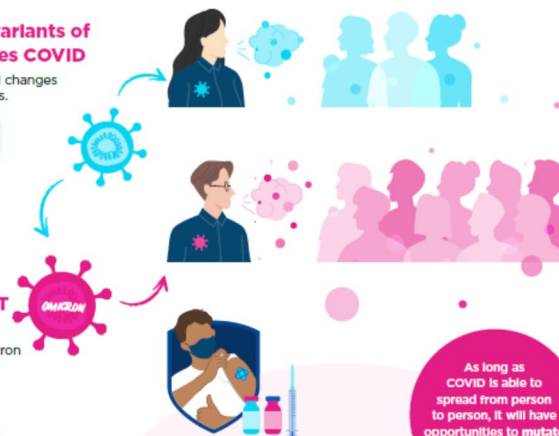
When viruses multiply, small changes in their genes create variants.



Some changes allow viruses to spread more easily or become resistant to treatments or vaccines.

### The Omicron variant is the MOST CONTAGIOUS yet

The highly contagious Omicron variant is causing nearly all new COVID-19 infections.



As long as COVID is able to spread from person to person, it will have opportunities to mutate and become more dangerous.

### FIND COVID-19 VACCINES NEAR YOU:

Go to [vaccines.gov](https://vaccines.gov)

Text your ZIP code to 438829

Call 1-800-232-0233

### Getting vaccinated and boosted is your best protection against severe illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID

The COVID-19 vaccines work well to protect you from severe illness, including from highly contagious variants. To help prevent the spread of COVID and protect others, both vaccinated and unvaccinated people should wear well-fitting masks inside public places when the COVID risk to your community is high.

**REMEMBER: To get the most protection from the vaccines, you need all recommended doses.**

- Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine requires one initial dose and a booster 2 months later.
- The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines require two initial doses and a booster 5 months later.

People with compromised immune systems are less able to fight infections and may need more than these recommended doses.

Content last reviewed: March 15, 2022

For more information, visit [CDC.GOV/CORONAVIRUS](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus).

## Ask a Doctor: Do COVID Vaccines Cause Infertility?

This resource is available in other languages | [View Language Options](#) ▾

Video featuring OB/GYN Dr. Joia Crear-Perry, explaining how doctors have found no evidence that the vaccines affect fertility in men or women.

NOT FOR DOWNLOAD



Ask a Doctor: Do COVID vaccines cause infertility?



Share

Joia Crear-Perry, MD  
OB/GYN



Watch on YouTube

This video is posted on YouTube. You can share it by clicking "Share" on the top right of the screen. It's not available for download at this time.

RESOURCE TYPE

LANGUAGE

# FDA resources

- COVID-19 main page: [www.fda.gov/coronavirus](https://www.fda.gov/coronavirus)
- COVID-19 vaccines: [www.fda.gov/covid19vaccines](https://www.fda.gov/covid19vaccines)
- COVID-19 resources for patients:
  - <https://www.fda.gov/patients/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-resources-patients>
- Enfermedad del Coronavirus (COVID-19):
  - [www.fda.gov/COVID19espanol](https://www.fda.gov/COVID19espanol)
- FDA YouTube:
  - <http://www.youtube.com/user/USFoodandDrugAdmin>
  - [Just a Minute!](#) with Dr. Peter Marks on COVID-19 vaccines
  - [En Español](#) – including numerous COVID-19 videos
- [www.fda.gov/medicalcountermeasures](https://www.fda.gov/medicalcountermeasures)
  - Subscribe to weekly emails @ bottom of page



# FDA COVID-19 response



- Communications is just one piece of the FDA response
- Many thanks to our colleagues who continue to work tirelessly to help end the COVID-19 pandemic

## More:

- [Infographic](#)
- [MCMi FY 2021 report](#)

# Thank you!

April L. Finnen, MBA

FDA Office of Counterterrorism & Emerging Threats

[April.Finnen@fda.hhs.gov](mailto:April.Finnen@fda.hhs.gov)

@FDA\_MCMi





**U.S. FOOD & DRUG  
ADMINISTRATION**

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**  
**Food and Drug Administration**  
Office of the Commissioner  
Office of the Chief Scientist  
Office of Counterterrorism and Emerging Threats  
10903 New Hampshire Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20993