

US hails first signs of vaccine success even as cases plateau

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US health authorities on Wednesday welcomed falling emergency hospitalization rates among the elderly and a decline in health workers becoming infected as the first signs of the COVID vaccination

campaign's success.

"We now see significant declines in emergency department visits among people over 65 as that age group has gotten vaccinated," Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said.

According to the latest figures, 502 over-65s were hospitalized with COVID in the week ending March 13, compared with 3,384 in the week ending January 9—about an 85 percent decline.

More than 38 million people in this age group, or 70 percent, have now received at least one dose of COVID vaccine while 43 percent are fully vaccinated.

The US is currently administering around 2.5 million shots per day.

Anthony Fauci, President Joe Biden's chief advisor on the pandemic, meanwhile presented real world research of the impact of vaccines that was published this week in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

One study concerned 23,234 employees of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center who were eligible to receive the vaccine from December 15 2020 through January 28, 2021.

The data showed 234 of 8,969 employees who were unvaccinated went on to be infected—that is 2.61 percent.

Among the partially vaccinated, the figure was 112 of 6,144, 1.82 percent. And among the fully vaccinated, four of 8,121 became infected, or 0.05 percent.

"These findings should be a jolt of hope for all of us, and to serve as a

catalyst for everyone to roll up their sleeves when the [vaccine](#) is available," said Walensky.

Asked whether the country was finally turning a corner in its pandemic, Fauci remained cautious.

"My response is really more like we are at the corner, whether or not we're going to be turning that corner still remains to be seen," he said.

The positive news was partly offset by the now weeks-long plateau of the nationwide infection rate, which remains high at some 55,000 new cases per day.

Most of these involve [younger people](#) who are not yet vaccinated, as states continue to loosen [coronavirus](#) restrictions and as virus variants establish themselves, including the UK variant and a newer one that has emerged in the northeast.

"When you are at that level, I don't think you can declare victory and say you've turned the corner," concluded Fauci.

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