

A Huge Step Forward

UNH junior among first to receive COVID vaccine

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Hannah Sorensen '22 has been working at Portsmouth Regional Hospital as a phlebotomist for the past two years. The part-time job has her drawing the blood of patients in the emergency room, as outpatients and, for those who are admitted, in their rooms.

That direct contact is why the [biomedical science major](#) is in the first round of those to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine in New Hampshire. Phase 1 of the state's plan includes at-risk health care workers, older adults in residential care

settings and first responders. Sorensen was scheduled to get the injection Thursday, Dec. 17.

“Personally, I think this vaccine is a huge step forward and I am so fortunate to have this opportunity to receive it. I know it has a lot of controversies right now, but one of the most critical factors in this vaccine is simply educating the public,” Sorensen says. “The main reason I chose to receive it is so that I can confidently do my part in keeping others safe and healthy.”

“It also kept me mindful to be diligent about wearing a mask and social distancing to help combat the spread.”

Because she was taking classes at UNH in person during the fall semester, Sorensen was tested for COVID twice a week, as were other students on campus. That frequency, along with the personal protection equipment (PPE) that Portsmouth Hospital supplies, has eased her mind while “working at a hospital while COVID cases were consistently on the rise,” the Danville, New Hampshire, resident says.

“It also kept me mindful to be diligent about wearing a mask and social distancing to help combat the spread,” Sorensen says. “One of my favorite parts of working in a hospital is that everyone works together as a team towards the common goal of providing the best care for our patients. To provide the best care, we have to make sure our staff is educated and safe.”

In addition to drawing blood, Sorensen works as a lab assistant, receiving and distributing specimens and making sure things run smoothly. Working weekends during the school year, she rotates between the 5 a.m. morning shift and 11 a.m. day shift and picks up more hours in the summer months.

“Working as a phlebotomist at PRH has given me endless amounts of patient contact hours and has grown my love for medicine and healthcare,” says Sorensen, who has her eye on med school.

Speaking to concerns about getting the vaccine, she says, “These times have not been easy on any of us. We, as U.S. citizens, have the freedom of choice. The best thing anyone can do regarding this vaccine is to properly educate themselves on what it entails, and then make their own decision.”

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