

# Chang's Story

## How VNS Health Helped Older Residents of Chinatown Get COVID-19 Vaccines

After the devastation the COVID-19 pandemic brought to New York City, the newly developed vaccines offered much-needed hope, but getting an appointment seemed impossible. However, the team at VNS Health worked tirelessly to ensure that older residents of Chinatown got the vaccines that they needed.



It was near the end of 2020. For almost a year, the pandemic had created a sense of isolation for many older residents of New York City's Chinatown, separating them from families, community activities, and regular health care. But finally,

there was a glimmer of hope for a return to normal: the first vaccines were rolling out.

However, getting the vaccine was easier said than done. Supply was limited, and availability was just the tip of the iceberg. Getting a shot required an appointment, which could be made only online or by phone. For the many older Chinatown residents who spoke limited English and did not use technology, getting an appointment was a daunting challenge.

## **Improving Access to the COVID-19 Vaccine**

In the early months of the vaccine rollout, VNS Health's Neighborhood Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NNORC) and our community center in Chinatown stepped in and helped more than 700 residents get vaccinated. Our team scoured websites to find appointments. They leveraged both organizations' close partnerships with city health officials and were even able to offer NNORC members transportation to and from appointments.

Additionally, the NNORC and the community center educated neighborhood residents about the vaccine, as they had done about the virus from the outset.

And VNS Health's efforts proved successful.

Among the residents who received vaccines thanks to VNS Health

were 73-year-old Chang\* and his 88-year-old sister. “When the vaccine came out, the first thing that came to my mind was, ‘I want it,’ but it was so difficult to get appointments,” Chang recalled.

Sue\*, a Chinatown resident who had diabetes and hypertension, also wanted the vaccine but struggled to get an appointment. Her son searched websites in the middle of the night for appointments, but to no avail. When a community center team member secured appointments for Sue and seven friends in a single afternoon, they were thrilled. Once Sue was fully vaccinated, she felt comfortable going to the grocery store, seeing her children, and even taking a day trip with vaccinated friends.

*For a year, our lives were flipped completely upside down with home confinement. I was truly tired, emotionally, mentally, and physically. Thanks to VNS Health, my life is finally taking a step towards normalcy.*

*– Sue, Chinatown resident*

## **Continuing Care During the Pandemic**

Throughout the pandemic, VNS Health team members worked diligently to ensure that New Yorkers had access to vaccines, treatments, education, and other resources needed to get through the difficult time.

Home health workers continued visiting their patients in their

homes during the height of the pandemic and took every precaution, including head-to-toe protection – N95 masks, face shields, shoe covers, gloves, and plenty of hand sanitizer – to keep their patients and themselves safe.

VNS Health team members also:

- Created a [video](#) on how to properly use personal protective equipment
- Switched certain services, like grief support groups, to a virtual format so that people could safely get the support they needed
- Published informational articles, such as “[Recovering from COVID-19 at Home](#),” in our health library.

In addition, the [Center for Home Care Policy and Research](#) at VNS Health carried out and published research that contributed to a growing body of knowledge about recovering from COVID-19 at home.

## Getting Back to Normal

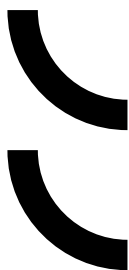
The world was forever changed by the pandemic, but the VNS Health team dedicated themselves to helping New Yorkers get back to as normal a life as possible.

“Some of our members were totally isolated, stressed, scared to go out,” said Helen, manager of the NNORC. “They had to stop seeing family and taking care of grandchildren. Since the vaccinations, they feel much better and are reconnecting with family. Life is back to normal.”

*\*Patient and family names have been changed to protect privacy.*

Your donation can help people like Chang and Sue receive care.

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