



WE LOVE WHAT WE DO

# CARE CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION FOR CLIENTS OF BAYADA AND FAMILY MEMBERS

BAYADA Clinical Manager Pam Compagnola, RN

## The COVID-19 Vaccine: What You Need to Know

BAYADA is committed to providing home health care services with the highest professional, ethical, and safety standards. Part of this commitment includes our comprehensive Infection Prevention Program, which provides the highest standards of infection prevention practices as recommended by The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Our clinicians pre-screen for COVID-19 before engaging in client care and abide by BAYADA's required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) standards that exceed standard precautions for the care of all clients. That is why your BAYADA clinician is wearing both a surgical mask and eye protection (at a minimum) during every visit or shift.

The COVID-19 vaccine is another layer of protection, and we are offering pathways for our clinicians to be vaccinated. Many BAYADA clinicians have already been vaccinated.

The two vaccines available at the time of this printing are the Pfizer and the Moderna vaccines, for which the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). The Pfizer vaccine is approved for those 16 years of age and older, and the Moderna vaccine is approved for those 18 years of age and older.

### Facts about the vaccine and dosage/administration:

- The vaccine cannot cause a COVID-19 infection and is not a "live" vaccine.
- Once vaccinated, your **BAYADA clinicians must still social distance, wear masks, and wash their hands frequently while not working. When they are providing care to BAYADA clients**, our clinicians will follow all BAYADA infection prevention practices, including wearing the required PPE. They will continue to do so until

the CDC relaxes those requirements, which occurs when a significant number of citizens have been vaccinated.

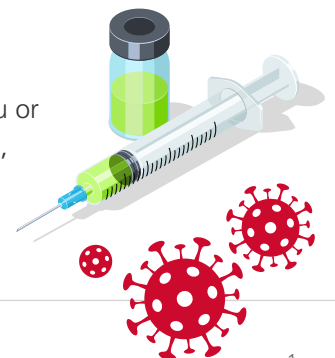
- **Two doses** of the vaccines are required for protection, delivered via intramuscular injection. The Pfizer vaccines are provided three weeks apart, and the Moderna vaccines are administered four weeks apart. The administration of the second dose has a four-day grace period in which it is considered valid.
- The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are **not interchangeable** with one another or with other COVID-19 vaccines. Both doses should be from the same manufacturer.
- The COVID-19 vaccine should **not be administered with other vaccines**. Individuals should not receive other vaccines within 14 days prior to and after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.



BAYADA Nurses proudly display their vaccination cards.

### Learn more

To learn more about the COVID-19 vaccine and see how and when you or your loved ones can get vaccinated, visit <http://bit.ly/Vaccine-CDC>.



# Champions Among Us: Insurance Denial Overturned



When **Gary and Brenda P.** welcomed their middle child, **Ben**, 28 years ago, they were told their medically fragile baby wouldn't make it to his first birthday. At six months, Ben had surgery to remove a brain tumor that was discovered at birth. It had wrapped around his optic nerve and into his hypothalamus, which plays a crucial role in releasing hormones, controlling appetite, and regulating body temperature and emotional responses.

Despite his grim prognosis, Ben continued to grow and develop. Eventually, though, Ben lost his vision, needed hormone replacement, and faced radiation to shrink the tumor, which grew back several times, eventually requiring another surgery at age 17. Six years ago, Ben had a stroke, which caused difficulty walking and short-term memory loss. The memory loss was especially frightening, as he would sometimes forget to take life-sustaining medication.

In 2018, following a 10-day stay in the hospital intensive care unit (ICU) to increase his life-threateningly low sodium levels, doctors agreed to discharge Ben if he had nursing care at home.

Fortunately, both Gary and Brenda are registered nurses. Following a 30-year career in a hospital emergency room, they became employees of the BAYADA Indiana County, PA office and were assigned to provide home health care nursing for Ben.

## The insurance company denies coverage

As if providing 'round-the-clock care to their son wasn't challenging enough, in July 2020 the family faced another hurdle. Ben's insurance company denied his authorized nursing hours because it was his parents who were employed by BAYADA to provide the nursing care he needed.

In a panic, Gary and Brenda reached out BAYADA Director **Tyler Torchia** who told them, "Take a deep breath, it'll be ok, we'll walk you through it."

Tyler connected the family with the Pennsylvania Health Law Project to assist in the appeal process, which led the insurance company to reinstate Ben's 114 hours of nursing a week. However, the success was short-lived. In September, the insurance company only approved 42 hours of nursing, insisting the remaining 72 hours be covered by a home health aide. But Ben's needs are so complex and fluid that only highly skilled, experienced nurses—in this case, his parents—could provide the care he needs to survive.

## Advocacy: Sometimes it takes a village

Tyler, along with BAYADA Clinical Managers **Cindy Zerfoss** and **Krystal Dematteis**, were instrumental in helping the family appeal the decision. They spent countless hours on the phone with the insurance company's service coordinator, encouraged Ben's primary physician and endocrinologist to write letters on his behalf, and again involved the PA Health Law Project.

When Gary and Brenda learned the insurance company had failed to tell them about a temporary emergency ability to get additional nursing hours for Ben, they filed a claim against them. A judge decided in the family's favor, resulting in Ben finally getting the nursing hours he needed.

Brenda expressed her gratitude for BAYADA's intervention. "They went the extra mile for us, really going above and beyond and living by BAYADA's mission that client's come first," she said. "It would have been so taxing without their support."

Gary couldn't agree more. "We want to give credit to the BAYADA staff," he said. "They were an advocate for Ben and they helped us as parents do what is best for our son. I am so grateful for the respect they showed for our family."

## Encouraging families to get involved

Unfortunately, insurance denials are far too common for those who receive home health care services.

"Many clients are not aware that, in some cases, they have the right to appeal a denial," shared Tyler, who encourages families to reach out to their BAYADA office for support. "Your director, clinical manager, and client services manager can help you through the appeals process and connect you with community resources that can provide additional support."



Ben with his parents, Gary and Brenda.

There are many ways to advocate for you or a loved one, from appealing an insurance denial, to sending a pre-written email to your legislators, to participating in a virtual legislative visit. To learn more, visit [heartsforhomecare.com](https://www.heartsforhomecare.com).



## BAYADA Helps Client's Dream of Becoming a Nurse Come True

When BAYADA client **Lauren**, 34, discovered the TV docudrama *The Untold Stories of the E.R.*, several years ago, after just a few episodes, she was hooked! The show fueled a passion in Lauren and ignited her dream of becoming an emergency room nurse, just like the nurses she admired on the screen.

Lauren, who was not expected to live past 18, has defied the odds. She was born with Pfeiffer syndrome, a rare genetic disorder characterized by premature fusion of certain skull bones; and Chiari malformation which results in structural defects in the cerebellum, the part of the brain that controls voluntary movements, balance, coordination and posture. She was also born with hydrocephalus—a build-up of fluid in the brain. She required a shunt in her head to remove the excess fluid.

### A dream comes true

Despite her diagnoses, Lauren never gave up on her ambition. She even researched schools and decided, if given the chance, she'd attend Columbia School of Nursing. Thanks to the BAYADA New York City office, that long-coveted dream would soon become reality—if only symbolic.

The BAYADA team transformed the family's living room into the perfect setting for an honorary nursing school graduation ceremony. The proud attendees included BAYADA New York City Director **Corey Landry**, Clinical Manager **Nancy Lonergan**, Client Services Manager **Chris Dunn**, BAYADA Nurse **Donna Davis**, RN, Lauren's mother **Daisy**, BAYADA Nurse **Kishma Maynard**, LPN, Lauren's father **Norman**, brother **Robert**, and sister **Maddie**. In addition, many other BAYADA staff joined by Zoom.



Lauren is pictured with her family during her ceremony.

During the festivities, Lauren became the delighted recipient of a BAYADA nursing ID card, a tote bag to store snacks during her "nursing shifts" a pair of nursing scrubs, and a mock diploma from Columbia School of Nursing.

### Another reason to celebrate

Although Donna had helped plan the surprise for Lauren, she had no idea her BAYADA team had a surprise in store for her as well.

The day ended on a high note for Donna, as Chris and Nancy officially honored her for being named as a BAYADA Division Hero. The company's Hero Program recognizes clinicians who consistently demonstrate the company's core values of *compassion, excellence, and reliability*.

As Donna humbly accepted a plaque, flowers, and a personal card from Lauren's family, she spoke of her love for her chosen profession—and her clients.

"I want to make things better for my clients and their families," said Donna, whose nursing career includes 30 years working with hospital cardiac patients and several years with a cardiology rehabilitation practice. "While I knew I had been nominated to be a Hero, the ceremony was a complete surprise. It was such a nice honor, but I was just doing what I love to do."

Daisy is so grateful for the nurses on Lauren's team.

"As clinicians they help Lauren stay safe at home, and they have become part of the family," she said. "Lauren looks forward to them, they provide her with comfort, and they care for her deeply."

Read Lauren's story in The Bronx Times by visiting <http://bit.ly/Lauren-Nurse>.



CSM Chris Dunn surprised BAYADA Nurse Donna Davis, RN to celebrate her Division Hero award.



Lauren was thrilled to get a BAYADA ID and her very own nursing scrubs.

**Congratulations!**



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BAYADA Home Health Care  
4300 Haddonfield Road  
Pennsauken, NJ 08109-3376

[bayada.com](http://bayada.com)



Content in this newsletter is provided as general summary information for our clients and is not intended to take the place of personalized medical guidance. We encourage you to seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health care professional if you have specific questions about your care. BAYADA specialty practices include Home Health Care, Pediatrics, Hospice, Behavioral Health, and Habilitation. Services may vary by location.

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## What is Medication Management and Why is it Important?

Taking multiple medications can lead to confusion over which medicines to take, how often, and how much. Taking your medicines incorrectly—skipping a dose, running out of a medication, or taking too much—not only decreases its intended effectiveness, it could increase the risk of a medication interaction that results in serious complications, hospitalizations, or worse.

### Medication management tips

Get the maximum benefit of your medications—while reducing the risk of complications—by following these steps:

- Stay organized.
- Keep all medications in one place.
- Always have a backup supply (though insurance denials can sometimes make this difficult).
- Create and maintain an up-to-date list that includes dosage, frequency, what the medication is for, and who prescribed it. This list should accompany every physician or hospital visit.

To download a free medication management tracker visit <http://bit.ly/Med-Manage>

- Make sure you understand the instructions before taking any new medications (when to take, with food, with water, may cause drowsiness, etc.).

- Set up a medication reminder or tracking system. This could be something as simple as daily marked pillboxes to more sophisticated technology systems and apps. Even programming “Alexa” can be a verbal cue to adhere to a medication plan.
- Be informed and understand potential side effects, such as dizziness, which increases the risk of falling. Some even mimic dementia-like behaviors, which can be misleading when searching for a cause of the symptoms.
- Plan for refills (if possible, use 90-day automatic mail order refills).
- Consult your doctor if you think you should stop taking medications for symptoms that no longer exist or for those that seem to be ineffective.

**Important note:** these tips aren’t suggested for people with Alzheimer’s disease or dementia. In these cases, safe medication management likely requires the oversight of a family member or paid caregiver.

For more information and an assessment of your or a loved one’s ability to manage their own medications, contact your BAYADA Clinical Manager.

