

Doctor's Death After Covid Vaccine Is Being Investigated

A Florida physician developed an unusual blood disorder shortly after he received the Pfizer vaccine. It is not yet known if the shot is linked to the illness.

By Denise Grady and Patricia Mazzei

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Health authorities are investigating the case of a Florida doctor who died from an unusually severe blood disorder 16 days after receiving the Pfizer coronavirus vaccine.

Dr. Gregory Michael, a 56-year-old obstetrician and gynecologist in Miami Beach, received the vaccine at Mount Sinai Medical Center on Dec. 18 and died 16 days later from a brain hemorrhage, his wife, Heidi Neckelmann, wrote in a Facebook post.

Shortly after receiving the vaccine, Dr. Michael developed an extremely serious form of a condition known as acute immune thrombocytopenia, which prevented his blood from clotting properly.

In a statement, Pfizer, the maker of the vaccine, said it was “actively investigating” the case, “but we don’t believe at this time that there is any direct connection to the vaccine.”

“There have been no related safety signals identified in our clinical trials, the post-marketing experience thus far,” or with the technology used to make the vaccine, the company said. “Our immediate thoughts are with the bereaved family.”

About nine million people in the United States have received at least one shot of either the Pfizer or Moderna coronavirus vaccine, the two authorized in the United States. So far, serious problems reported were 29 cases of anaphylaxis, a severe allergic reaction. None were reported as fatal. Many people have had other side effects like sore arms, fatigue, headache or fever, which are usually transient.

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Local and federal agencies are investigating Dr. Michael's death. Several experts said the case was highly unusual but could have been a severe reaction to the vaccine.

The Florida Department of Health referred Dr. Michael's death to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for investigation. Kristen Nordlund, a C.D.C. spokeswoman, said in a statement that the agency would “evaluate the situation as more information becomes available and provide timely updates on what is known and any necessary actions.”