

COVID vaccine update for SA GPs webinar – Q&A

Phase 1a:

- Can GPs working in RACF get the vaccination? How do they register for Pfizer vaccine - whom do they contact? Are they going to be contacted by Govt/Aspen or nursing home? **Commonwealth will contact those residents first for vaccination.**
- As GPs, we are at high risk of COVID but are not in Phase 1a? **Phase 1b for GPs, which will be soon after 1a commences.**
- Do adults with a disability not currently living in group residential care (ie still at home with family carers) qualify for Phase 1a or 1b? **No, but may be eligible in 1b depending on age.**
- Private practices that are offering their own respiratory clinics and providing a swabbing service – will they be 1a? **No. 1b.**

Phase 1b:

- Is the 'medically at risk' group defined in 1b? If not, are there guidelines? **Yes, ATAGI has guidelines online. Can use the Commonwealth vaccine priority check as well.**
- If GPs are vaccinating those over age 70, but the Astra Zeneca vaccine is not recommended to those over age 65, what do we do? **The ATAGI advice is being reviewed as the > 65 years is not based on safety, but looking at immunogenicity.**

Phase 2:

- Will there be large SA Health led vaccination centres in subsequent phases (phase 2 on), to mass vaccinate efficiently, like we see overseas (large centres, separate to hospital hubs and GP clinics)? **Uncertain, will be based on GP uptake.**

Aged care/elderly:

- Will GPs need to be vaccinated to enter aged care facilities? **No**
- What about pharmacists that deliver to aged care? **Not included in 1a unless providing care, based on CW advice.**
- The Pfizer vaccine will still be rolled out throughout – will it be used in elderly patients who are not in aged care facilities? **Yes**
- Case by case for over 85yrs – what needs to be taken into account? **That someone is not palliative or end of life.**

Virology:

- I've heard suggestions that there should be 12 weeks gap between doses, to enable everyone to get one dose quickly and then do round 2. Is that so? Does flu vaccination fit in the middle somewhere? **This can be done. AZ can be 12 weeks apart.**

- Do COVID infected patients still need to be vaccinated post infection and at 90 days post infection?
Yes. still need to be vaccinated. Advise > 90 days post-acute infection. Still two doses.
- The assumption then is that once vaccinated will that confuse the testing for COVID-19 (false +ve)?
No. No impact on PCR testing or sewerage testing.
- Are the vaccines interchangeable? That is, if you have Pfizer one year can you have the Astra Zeneca the next? I understand this is something being studied?
Can have both vaccines, but impact not known. Two different vaccines. However, need to have a full course of each.
- After vaccination, is there any contagiousness? Need to wear mask? Take other precautions?
No
- How does the Novavax work and how does it compare in efficacy with the other two?
Who will be recommended to have this?
We need to wait on ATAGI advice, not planned until later in the year.
- What are the contraindications to vaccine?
None. However, case by case for pregnancy and undergoing concurrent chemo Rx, but this is about timing of the vaccine

Specific cases:

- Are there any resources you can provide to decide who should and who should not get vaccinated?
Yes, CW has resources online.
- Immunocompromised – criteria?
Not a contraindication to vaccine, however vaccine may not be as effective.
- Those on immunosuppressive therapy, will the vaccine still be effective?
Uncertain, however should discuss with specialist around dose timing
- Will patients on chemotherapy get the vaccine?
Yes – but need to wait 3 months post stem cell.
- Persons with a known (diagnosed) allergy to PEG, another mRNA vaccine component, or polysorbate?
Advice to be sought from immunologist – RAH have established a clinic for this.
- Which priority category will correctional care facilities be placed in?
1b.

Pregnancy:

- If the vaccines are “not routinely recommended” in pregnancy, what would the exceptions be? If a pregnant woman is heading to UK or USA **Yes** or other high prevalence area, should they have it before they travel? **Yes** And if a woman of reproductive age is contemplating a pregnancy, should they delay pregnancy plans post vaccine? **No**
- Would there be a biological basis for any concern in pregnancy?
Appears safe, however, need further data. ATAGI have advised a case by case risk assessment based on exposure risk.

- As the vaccinations are contra-indicated in pregnancy is there any consideration for women planning a pregnancy to be vaccinated earlier than the general population?
Not contraindicated, but not routinely advised as part of routine pregnancy vaccines.
- Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine and pregnancy and breastfeeding mothers?
Safe in BF, early data suggests safe in pregnancy
> 20,000 pregnant women have been vaccinated overseas.
- What about a pregnant RACF worker – what would you advise?
Case by case discussion, however, safety data not complete yet.

General:

- What is the recommendation regarding alcohol consumption before the vaccination?
No contraindication.
- Will there be a standardised vaccination certificate provided for people by GPs for use to travel out of Australia?
No. But CW AIR upload.
- When patient groups e.g. over 65 or pregnant women have not been studied in trials, and vaccine is recommended on a case-by-case basis, what do you suggest we say to our patients? How can we really consent patients when we know so little?
ATAGI advise and patient can consider waiting if in the lower risk category. However, > 65 years is not safety data this is about how effective the vaccine is.
- Do you know if it will be compulsory to get vaccinated before flying overseas?
Unknown.
- Will multi-dose vials pose a sterility risk? Remember the ACT HIV transmissions incident many years ago.
Must use a vial at one time.
- As a rural GP who also provides care to local residential care facilities, am I just waiting to hear from the local PHN to inform if I'll be involved in the vaccine administration for residents?
Yes, ASPEN medical are contracted in SA to provide RACF vaccines.
Managed by CW / PHN
- For clinics that have not yet put in an EOI for phase 1b but want to participate in phase 2 vaccines, do we need to submit an EOI for this?
Yes
- Will travellers coming from overseas who have had the two doses have to quarantine?
Yes still need to quarantine.
- Any scope for administration of vaccine by AHPs?
Yes – in SA can administer.
- You mentioned 14 days gap between COVID and influenza immunisations - after the 1st COVID vaccine injection or the 2nd?
Both.