

Dr Adrian Hayter and Dr Nisha Jayatilleke
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17th December 2020

Dear Dr Hayter and Dr Jayatilleke

Re: Vaccination access for blood cancer patients, families and healthcare teams

I am writing to raise concerns we are hearing from the blood cancer clinical community and patients about priority access to Covid-19 vaccinations. As you know blood cancer patients have been shown to be amongst the most at risk and have the worst outcomes from Covid-19.

Whilst I appreciate the challenge you face in terms of ensuring the supply of vaccines reaches those most vulnerable to Covid-19, I am concerned that the current system means vaccines are being given to healthcare staff on an ad-hoc basis rather than prioritising staff working with clinically extremely vulnerable patients. We have heard from numerous hospitals that despite the JCVI advice of 2nd December that healthcare staff who are vulnerable themselves, or who are working with vulnerable patients, should have priority access, that is not currently happening. We have heard that there has not been clear enough guidance from NHSE as to who amongst healthcare staff should be prioritised. To give an example of the risk this poses, one stem cell transplantation unit had 15 members of staff test positive in one week, three of whom were nurses who had had contact with every single stem cell transplantation patient on the ward. Whilst they were wearing PPE they were within two metres of these very vulnerable patients.

There also appears to be an anomaly regarding non-malignant patients who have received a stem cell transplant. Currently, if these non-malignant patients had their transplant more than six months ago they fall into priority level 6. Whereas patients with cancer of the blood or bone marrow at any stage of treatment and patients who have received a stem cell transplant in the last 6 months, or who are still on immunosuppressants are in priority level 4.

Finally, I know allowing household members of those who are clinically extremely vulnerable priority access to vaccines is being considered and I would like to emphasise how important this is for blood cancer patients. This is particularly the case given that we do not yet know how effective vaccines will be for protecting immunocompromised people.

To summarise, we would like to see:

- NHS Trusts asked to prioritise Haemato-oncology staff for vaccination.
- Priority for all patients who have received a stem cell transplantation, not just those within 6 months of transplant or still on immunosuppressants
- Priority for those living with people who are clinically extremely vulnerable.

Yours sincerely,



Zpwhiteley

Zack Pemberton-Whiteley

Chair

Blood Cancer Alliance

On behalf of: ACLT, Anthony Nolan, Blood Cancer UK, CLL Support, CML Support, DKMS, Leukaemia Care, Leukaemia and Lymphoma Northern Ireland, Leukaemia Cancer Society, Leukaemia UK, Lymphoma Action, MDS UK, Myeloma UK, Race Against Blood Cancer and WMUK.