

11th March 2021 - Call for review of COVID vaccine timings for blood cancer patients

Following the publication of emerging evidence that the Pfizer COVID vaccines are less effective for cancer patients after a single dose, the Blood Cancer Alliance (BCA) has today written to the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) asking them to review the case for a reduction in the 12-week delay between vaccination doses for blood cancer patients.

The Blood Cancer Alliance is a group of fifteen UK charities working to tackle the issues blood cancer patients face, to improve the experience and outcomes of all those living with blood cancer.

The BCA has asked the JCVI to formally examine whether reducing the time between doses of the Pfizer vaccine for this patient group, to the 21 days that the vaccine manufacturer recommends, will give greater protection for this group of immunocompromised patients.

The BCA is also calling on the Government to establish investment in relevant clinical research to understand vaccine efficacy in blood cancer patients more fully, both after a single dose, and after full vaccination is complete.

The BCA is also asking that shielding guidance be extended while work is undertaken to understand how effective the vaccine is for the immunocompromised in the longer term. The clinically extremely vulnerable remain eligible for furlough for the duration of the scheme and we urge employers to continue furloughing staff who cannot work safely from home, even after the end of shielding guidance.

Zack Pemberton-Whiteley, Chair of the Blood Cancer Alliance, said:

"The emerging evidence published by Kings College and the Crick Institute today will be incredibly worrying for immunocompromised blood cancer patients, many of whom have already been shielding for 12 months now.

We strongly urge the JCVI to consider this evidence and undertake a formal review as to whether the time between doses for these vulnerable patients should be shortened.

The vaccines are safe, and we urge everyone to take up the offer of being vaccinated. However, in order to give adequate information to blood cancer patients, the Government must also invest in research to understand what level of protection the vaccines will afford the immunocompromised in the longer term in comparison to the general population.

Until we have this information, it is important that the Government extends its shielding guidance and support. We must also ensure blood cancer patients are not pressured to return to work before they can make an informed decision about the level of protection vaccination affords them."

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NOTES TO EDITORS

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