

Memo

Decision to use the Pfizer mRNA COVID-19 vaccine for group three and general population: COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group (CV TAG) recommendations

Date: 27 May 2021

To: Dr Ashley Bloomfield, Director-General of Health

Cc: Allison Bennett, Manager, System Enablers, System Strategy and Policy
Joanne Gibbs, Director of National Operations, COVID Vaccine Immunisation Programme
Dr Caroline McElnay, Director of Public Health

From: Dr Ian Town, Chief Science Advisor

For your: Information

Purpose of report

1. To outline the COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group's recommendations on the decision to use the Pfizer mRNA COVID-19 vaccine for group three at scale and the general population in New Zealand.

Context

2. Following Medsafe's provisional approval of the Pfizer mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (Comirnaty, BNT162b2) for people 16 years and over on 3 February 2021, the COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group (CV TAG) met on 4 February 2021 to provide the scientific and technical assessment of the Pfizer mRNA COVID-19 vaccine and outlined recommendations on its use for New Zealand's Vaccine Immunisation Programme.
3. Advice was provided to Cabinet which recommended that we proceed with providing access to the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine in line with the Sequencing Framework, noting the primary limitation of use in those 16 years and over, in line with the Medsafe provisional approval.
4. It was noted that the Ministry of Health would provide further advice on the use of the Pfizer vaccine, alongside the other vaccines in our portfolio, before immunising people identified in group three at scale (group three includes people in the community most at risk of serious illness and the workforces supporting them).
5. Given that we are progressing with group three at scale and then moving into the general population roll out in July, the Policy team sought advice from CV TAG on whether there is any new information since the initial rollout of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine that would materially impact on the implementation of the Sequencing Framework and Immunisation Programme at this time.

6. The initial decision to use Pfizer for groups one and two was made on a basis that there would be further consideration of other candidates in our portfolio by the time we were due to roll out to these groups, however, such regulatory decisions remain pending at this point in time.

Recommendations

7. CV TAG met on 25 May 2021 and completed a scientific and technical assessment of the Pfizer mRNA COVID-19 vaccine, in order to provide these recommendations.
8. CV TAG noted that:
 - a) Updated information from the global rollout is being reviewed regularly and there has not been any evidence to indicate a concern about using Pfizer for the wider rollout.
 - b) To date, the safety data from Aotearoa-New Zealand are consistent with the known safety profile, including in ethnic populations and those with co-morbidities.
9. CV TAG agreed that the safety and effectiveness data, to date, regarding the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine are consistent with previous evidence, with no new concerns being raised about using this vaccine for the wider rollout to group three.
10. **CV TAG confirms the Decision to Use the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for group three and the wider general population in New Zealand.**

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Dr Ian Town

Chief Science Advisor and

Chair of the COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group