

Memo

Comorbidities associated with poor COVID-19 outcomes for vaccine sequencing considerations: COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group (CV TAG) recommendations

Date: 17 March 2021

To: Joanne Gibbs, Director of National Operations, COVID Vaccine Immunisation Programme

Cc: Dr Ian Town, Chief Science Advisor

From: Sue Gordon, Deputy Chief Executive COVID-19 Health Systems Response

For your: Information

Purpose of report

1. To outline the COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group's recommendation following a request for opinion regarding the definitions / thresholds to be used for vaccinating individuals with hypertension and obesity.

Context

2. The COVID-19 vaccine sequencing nationwide in Tier 2 and Tier 3 will include individuals with a range of co-morbidities associated with a poor outcome after COVID-19 infection. The current list of co-morbidities is in close alignment with the CDC and Australian list of co-morbidities for COVID-19, and also with the existing list of health conditions for which the influenza vaccine is publicly funded (the "influenza list").
3. A proposal is being developed to utilise the influenza list of comorbidities to identify those who should be prioritised for vaccination with the COVID-19 vaccine.
4. Hypertension and obesity are currently not included in the influenza framework but are associated with poor outcomes for COVID-19, and they are identified as risk factors by the US CDC and Australian guidelines.
5. Inclusion of well-controlled hypertension and any degree of obesity (defined as BMI $>30\text{kg/m}^2$) will include a large proportion of the population, as hypertension and obesity are common conditions. The US CDC and Australian guidelines use severe or poorly controlled hypertension, and severe obesity ($>40\text{kg/m}^2$).
6. Based on this, the vaccine sequencing group requested an opinion from CV TAG members regarding the definitions and thresholds to be used in New Zealand for vaccinating individuals with hypertension and obesity. In the development of a specific definition or threshold, the sequencing team asked CV TAG members to consider the prevalence of the

condition in the community, the risk of a condition resulting in severe disease after COVID-19 infection, the strength of the evidence base, and the criteria used in other jurisdictions.

7. CV TAG members considered the request from the vaccine sequencing group on 11 March 2021.

Recommendations

8. CV TAG recommended that individuals associated with a poor outcome after COVID-19 infection that should be considered for vaccine sequencing prioritisation should include:
 - a) Māori and Pacific Peoples aged over 55 years.
 - b) Community Services Card (CSC) holders with high medical, physical, mental, or social needs, e.g., homeless individuals
 - c) Non-CSC holders who qualify for the influenza vaccine (except children and pregnant women)
 - d) Non-CSC holders with severe obesity, defined as $BMI > 40 \text{ kg/m}^2$
 - e) Non-CSC holders with poorly controlled or severe hypertension, defined as hypertension requiring two or more agents for control or not currently under adequate control



Dr Ian Town

**Chief Science Advisor and
Chair of the COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group**