

25 January 2021

The Hon Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Health

By email to: Minister.Hunt@health.gov.au

Dear Minister

Re: People with severe mental illness and COVID-19 vaccination prioritisation

The RANZCP would like to take this opportunity to recognise the Government's response to COVID-19 and the initiatives that were introduced to meet the needs of people with mental illness, their carers and family members as well as the workforce which supports them.

With the development of COVID-19 vaccinations, the RANZCP would like to highlight the importance that vaccination roll-out plans prioritise people with serious mental illness as a priority group.

There is growing evidence that people with serious mental illness have an increased risk of being infected by COVID-19, and also have higher subsequent rates of hospitalisation, morbidity, and mortality. [1, 2] People with serious mental illness are also more likely to have co-morbidities [3], and as such must be considered a priority group for COVID-19 vaccination.

The RANZCP recognises that people with severe mental illness have less uptake of vaccinations due to access, awareness of services and other complex issues. The RANZCP would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation to support the planning and development of other avenues for vaccination provision and to increase the communication to service users regarding the benefits of vaccination.

The RANZCP acknowledges our role in improving the mental and physical health of people with serious mental illness and is willing to be involved in facilitating the increased uptake of vaccination to our patients.

Please do not hesitate to contact me via President@ranzcp.org should you wish to clarify or discuss further.

Yours sincerely



Associate Professor John Allan
President

Ref: 2043

Cc: Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation, ATAGI.secretariat@health.gov.au

References

1. Wang Q, Xu R, Volkow ND. Increased risk of COVID-19 infection and mortality in people with mental disorders: analysis from electronic health records in the United States. *World Psychiatry*. 2020.
2. Li L, Li F, Fortunati F, Krystal JH. Association of a prior psychiatric diagnosis with mortality among hospitalized patients with Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) Infection. *JAMA network open*. 2020;3(9):e2023282-e.
3. Warren N, Kisely S, Siskind D. Maximizing the Uptake of a COVID-19 Vaccine in People with Severe Mental Illness: A Public Health Priority. *JAMA psychiatry*. 2020.