



Clinical Programme Implementation & Professional Development

Brid Smith TD
Leinster House,
Dublin 2

24th January 2022

PQ 63305/21 - To ask the Minister for Health the reason for the retraction of initial Covid-19 vaccination advice to pharmacists to vaccinate persons over the age of 16 years; his views on whether pharmacists who have worked tirelessly to play a vital role in expediting the administration of boosters are now faced with having to spend time explaining the u-turn to patients instead of vaccinating them; if his attention has been further drawn to the mixed messages this presents during a critical period of the pandemic; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Brid Smith

Deputy Smith,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above PQ.

Pharmacies are a valued part of healthcare in the community settings. In the week commencing 15th November 2021, the pharmacy sector came on-board to bring vital additional capacity to the booster programme. The Health Service continues to roll out vaccines through pharmacies with over 700,000 vaccines including more than 360,000 booster doses administered as of 19th Jan 2022. There is ongoing communication and consultation between HSE vaccination programme leads and the IPU and other key pharmacy stakeholder groups as the vaccination booster programme is implemented.

The HSE is consistently endeavouring to maximise the uptake of vaccination efficiently with resources available to it in Vaccination Centres, participating GP surgeries and participating Pharmacies. Against the backdrop of asking GP surgeries to concentrate on vaccination services for a time limited period, it was considered more effective to concentrate rather than diversify the communication key messages at that time.

Therefore, it was clarified on the 15th December that pharmacists were requested only to vaccinate the following groups with a booster vaccine:

- healthcare workers
- people with underlying conditions (categories 4 and 7)
- people aged 50 years and over
- pregnant women

For your further information a newly established 'Community Pharmacy Planning Forum' with HSE, DoH and key pharmacy stakeholder groups (IPU, PSI and IOP) meets regularly to provide for ongoing engagement and consultation with the pharmacy sector to support consideration of the strategic direction for the future development of community pharmacy services in line with Sláintecare. The forum also provides a process for ongoing strategic planning required for the future of community pharmacy in the long term, in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 Public Health Emergency.

Pharmacies have contributed greatly to the COVID -19 vaccination programme and continue to do so. I hope the above is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Kate Mulveena
(Pharmacy lead)