



Vaccination of caregivers against Covid-19 must become mandatory

Presse release of the French National Academy of Medicine

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Even before the first vaccine candidates had reached the phase 3 of development of clinical trials, the idea of making mandatory vaccination against SARS-CoV-2 was discussed as the only possibility to overcome vaccine hesitancy and to achieve rapidly an effective herd immunity against the Covid-19 pandemic.

Faced with a major infectious risk threatening the community and against which effective vaccines are available, the principle of compulsory vaccination should be considered, particularly for some professional categories, even if the availability of vaccines is currently still limited.

The French National Academy of Medicine has repeatedly stated that this principle should be maintained when vaccination is the only way to ensure a real protection for the population, particularly in communities (nurseries, schools, accommodation establishments), for exposed professions, travelers, migrants, and during epidemics [1]. The Covid-19 pandemic, which represents the most serious health and economic crisis since the Second World War, meets all the criteria for the introduction of mandatory vaccination.

The caregivers are at the origin of 34% of clustered cases of nosocomial SARS-CoV-2 [2]. For this reason, vaccination against Covid-19 is readily available to healthcare professionals. In order to protect their health and that of the patients they take care of, they constitute a legitimately priority category for access to the vaccine. However, despite this ease of access, the vaccination coverage rates among doctors, nurses, care assistants and professionals working in establishments for dependent elderly people (EHPADs) remain notoriously insufficient, comparable to those observed for influenza [3].

In the current epidemiological situation, which reflects an unstable balance between restrictive measures, the progression of SARS-CoV-2 variants and the gradual extension of vaccination coverage, mass vaccination is the main lever to implement for action against Covid-19. The systematic vaccination of health professionals, which has become a priority, cannot be considered as optional.

Considering that vaccine hesitation is ethically unacceptable among care givers, **the French National Academy of Medicine** recommends that vaccination against Covid-19 be made compulsory for all health care professionals working in the public or liberal sector, in health care institutions and in establishments for dependent elderly people (EHPADs) (instead of nursing home), as well as for home helpers for the elderly.

1. Press release from the French National Academy of Medicine " Vaccination obligation: protect without coercing, it is possible", January 19, 2016
2. Santé Publique France. Covid-19, weekly epidemiological update, February 18, 2021
3. Press release from the French National Academy of Medicine " Vaccinating all caregivers against the flu: an obvious obligation ", September 19, 2020