

Vaccination or isolation: the proper use of the obligation

Press release of the French National Academy of Medicine

July 19, 2021

In his speech of Monday July, 12, the President of the Republic announced a series of measures, precipitated by the worsening of the epidemiological situation, in order to stem the Covid-19 epidemic. Some of these measures (compulsory vaccination for health care workers, extension of the health pass, delisting of PCR and antigenic convenience tests) validate the recommendations of the French National Academy of Medicine [1].

Another measure, included in the draft bill sent to the Council of State, provides for the mandatory isolation during 10 days of any person found to be contaminated by SARS-CoV-2; according to Article 4 of the draft law on the adaptation of our health crisis management tools, *"The communication to the concerned person of the result of a virological screening test or of any conclusive medical examination asserting that he or she is contaminated by Covid-19 automatically entails the placement and maintenance in isolation mentioned in Article L. 3131-17 of the public health code for a period of ten days in the residence that he or she declared at the time of the examination"*.

Until now, the "test-trace-isolate" strategy, renamed in September 2020 "test, alert, protect", has revealed weaknesses, with the multiplication of screening tests leading to delays in the results delivery [2], contact tracing being rapidly overwhelmed in the event of epidemic resumption and isolation not being systematically respected [3]. Contrary to what happens in other countries, isolation applies in France on a voluntary basis, hence its low effectiveness, as many infected persons not agreeing to submit to this constraint. Making this measure compulsory would obviously have a beneficial effect in slowing down the transmission of SARS-CoV-2, but would require the reinforcement of controls and the introduction of a scale of penalties. The current practice of home health support by a nurse should then be supplemented by random checks carried out by police or gendarmerie forces. Such a provision might be poorly accepted by our fellow citizens.

Moreover, the fear of having to undergo a compulsory isolation under sanction penalties would encourage many people to bypass the screening procedures entered into the SI-DEP digital tool by using self-tests available in pharmacies.

In view of the rapidly increasing incidence of infections due to the Delta variant, **the French National Academy of Medicine recommends:**

- to amplify information on the principle of voluntary isolation and on the accommodation capacities for people unable to isolate themselves at home;
- to encourage all people who test positive to isolate themselves for 10 days by reminding them of the risk of contamination to which they expose those around them;
- to make only one measure compulsory: vaccination against Covid-19 for all French people aged 12 and over.

1 Press release from the French National Academy of Medicine and the French National Academy of Pharmacy "Compulsory vaccination against Covid-19, a public health duty and a democratic commitment", July 9, 2021

2 Press release from the French National Academy of Medicine "Don't wait for a second wave" September 28, 2020

3 Press release from the French National Academy of Medicine "Feedback: designing an effective screening" October 20, 2020