

Compulsory vaccination against Covid-19: let's dare to make the final step

Press release of the French National Academy of Medicine

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While the fifth wave of Covid-19 is undergoing an impressive rebound due to the uncontrollable spread of the Omicron variant throughout the world, vaccination returns to the forefront of countermeasures against the consequences of this epidemic exacerbation. Faced with the considerable increase in the daily number of new infections, the saturation of intensive care units, due in part to the most severe forms of the disease, and the need to deprogram an increasing number of foreseen interventions, several European countries (Greece, Austria, Italy, Germany) are setting up or considering a compulsory vaccination.

In May 2021, as soon as France had enough doses of vaccine to immunize its entire population, the French National Academy of Medicine came out in favor of an obligation, suggesting that the vaccination against SARS-CoV-2 should be required for any activity involving a people gathering, the individual vaccination status being controllable by means of a vaccination pass [1].

The introduction of the health pass, which came into force on 9 June, 2021, was an important step in the fight against the pandemic, encouraging several million French people to be vaccinated to enable them to access to establishments open to the public and, from August 9, to cafés, restaurants, hospitals, retirement homes, airplanes and long-distance bus or train journeys. However, this measure was too late to contain the 4th wave of the epidemic that appeared in July and too partial to avoid the 5th wave that appeared in November, as 10% of people eligible for vaccination (i.e. aged 12 and over) were still not vaccinated.

The bill on the transformation of the health pass into a vaccine pass currently examined by the members of parliament offers a salutary opportunity for unvaccinated people to benefit from an immune protection as soon as possible, at least against severe forms of the disease and the risk of death. This is a necessary choice to increase herd immunity in the event of the emergence of new variants.

However, **the French Academy of Medicine wishes to point out:**

- that the doctrine of the vaccine pass must be clearly stated and sincerely defended as a vaccine obligation, not disguised, as well as the other vaccine obligations currently in force;
- that, faced with a deadly epidemic that cannot be controlled by any other means, compulsory vaccination is a civic duty and not a threat of punishment: announced as a general mobilization against a common enemy, SARS-CoV-2, it should lead to the adhesion of a very large majority of French people;

- that the exigibility of the vaccination pass must be extended to all meeting places (work, leisure, shops, public transport), without forgetting people working at home with elderly and/or vulnerable people (housekeepers, family helpers, etc.). Any derogation from the principle of universality would limit its scope and reduce its effectiveness.

- that the rare medical contraindications, permanent or temporary, to vaccination against COVID-19 should refer to the statement provided by the HAS College [2].

[1] Press Release of the French National Academy of Medicine: "Obligation" is not a fool word when it applies to vaccinating against Covid-19", May 25, 2021

[2] Collège de la Haute Autorité de Santé : Opinion n° 2021.0059/AC/SEESP relating to contraindications to vaccination against COVID-19, August 4, 2021