

**To allow caregivers not vaccinated against Covid-19 to get back to work would be a serious mistake**

**Press release of the French National Academy of Medicine**

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Since September 15, 2021, all professionals working in the health and medico-social sectors have been subject to a mandatory vaccination against Covid-19 [1].

Noting the frequency of nosocomial infections with SARS-CoV-2, the French National Academy of Medicine had requested, as of April 2020, that severe forms of Covid-19 in caregivers be declared as a service-related condition and included in the table of occupational diseases [2].

When vaccines became available, the Academy came out very early in favor of compulsory vaccination of caregivers to protect their health and that of the patients they care for, as hesitation to get vaccinated is ethically unacceptable in their profession [3].

From October 16, 2021, failure to comply with this vaccination obligation would incur, for salaried caregivers or public employees, a suspension without remuneration. In total, nearly 0.3% of hospital professionals, caregivers and non-caregivers, would have thus been suspended since autumn 2021, according to the “Fédération Hospitalière de France”, which points out that their reinstatement would not compensate for the severe shortage of staff in hospitals [4].

As the opportunity to reinstate healthcare workers suspended for non-vaccination has been raised during the debates in the French Parliament, the National Academy of Medicine wishes to recall:

- that any refusal to be vaccinated motivated by personal convictions is respectable, but incompatible with the profession of caregiver.
- that the reduced effectiveness of vaccines in preventing infection and contagion by the new variants of SARS-CoV-2 cannot justify the reinstatement of non-vaccinated persons: current vaccines retain a residual effectiveness against transmission, which must be completed by the strict respect of barrier gestures in health care settings;
- that none of the repeated arguments (lack of efficacy, side effects, lack of hindsight, ...) can be used to scientifically validate the refusal to be vaccinated, the real medical contraindications to vaccination being very rare;
- that vaccination remains very effective against the different variants and sub-variants to protect against severe forms of Covid-19, and therefore makes the recognition of severe Covid-19 as an occupational disease exceptional in vaccinated healthcare workers.

The reintegration of non-vaccinated health professionals into the health care team would compromise the climate of trust and cohesion that must exist between its members and with the

patients. It would endanger fragile patients. As it would only concern a very limited number of health care workers, it would not solve the current difficulties of hospital operation.

This is why the French National Academy of Medicine expresses its firm opposition to such a reversal of position.

#### References:

1. Légifrance. Law n° 2021-1040 of August 5, 2021 on the management of the health crisis (articles 12-19).
2. French National Academy of Medicine. Press release: "Covid-19 and occupational health", April 3, 2020.
3. French National Academy of Medicine. Press release: " Vaccination of caregivers against Covid-19 must become mandatory", March 9, 2021
4. Fédération Hospitalière de France. Human Resources situation survey, April/May 2022.