

## **From the suspension to the repeal of compulsory vaccinations for caregivers**

### **How far will the regression go ?<sup>1</sup>**

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

**June 19, 2023**

On March 30, 2023, the French National Authority for Health published its recommendations on the vaccination requirements for students and professionals of the healthcare and medico-social sectors, working in close contact with young children (diphtheria, tetanus, poliomyelitis, hepatitis B, Covid-19). It concluded that vaccination against Covid-19 should no longer be mandatory for caregivers, but only strongly recommended (1). Based on this opinion, the government issued a decree on May 13, 2023 suspending Covid-19 vaccination requirement for healthcare workers, and defining the procedures for reinstating suspended staff. On May 4, 2023, the French National Assembly passed a bill to repeal the law of August 5, 2021 making compulsory vaccination against Covid-19 in the medical, paramedical and personal assistance sectors.

While the decision to suspend compulsory vaccination was questionable, the majority position of the National Assembly which led to repeal the mandatory vaccination is not defensible in terms of public health. The current endemic-sporadic context of Covid-19 justifies maintaining a vigilant surveillance in order that compulsory vaccination can be restored by decree in the event of a resurgence of the epidemic. This repeal by law would be considered as an abdication face to the spread of "anti-vax" theories within health establishments, particularly by those categories of staff who have been the hardest impacted during the health crisis and who suffer from a serious lack of recognition. It would be also a renunciation face to demands favoring free choice and individualism rather than recognition of the exemplary, ethical and responsible attitude that should be the pride of each caregiver (2). The honor of a caregiver is to do everything feasible not to harm his/her patient, and not to transmit a potentially fatal infection to a fragile or immunocompromised patient.

While the period was marked by the remarkable effectiveness of the Covid-19

vaccination and that the prospects opened up by vaccines in development are very encouraging for the progress in public health, the **French national Academy of medicine** is deeply concerned by the spread of anti-vaccination ideology within healthcare structures. It calls to:

- reserve a larger place for the teaching of vaccinology in all preparatory training courses for healthcare professions, in particular in nurse and care assistant training institutes;
- reconsider the decision to suspend compulsory vaccination against Covid-19 and to include annual vaccination against influenza and Covid-19 in those required for professionals working in the health, medico-social and personal assistance sectors.

**It is opposed to the legislative proposal to repeal the vaccination obligation.**

## References

1. Haute autorité de santé. Obligations et recommandations vaccinales des professionnels : actualisation des recommandations et obligations pour les étudiants et professionnels des secteurs sanitaires, médicosocial et en contacts étroits avec de jeunes enfants (volet 1/2 : diphtérie, tétanos, poliomyélite, hépatite B, Covid-19), March 30, 2023.
2. Communiqué from the French National Academy of Medicine, "Compulsory vaccinations for health care workers: the honor of a profession", March 29, 2023.

[1] Press release from the Academy's Rapid Communication Platform.

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