

Weekly update from the Surgery

Dear all

It feels a bit as if the pause button has been pushed. Perhaps it is good to take stock for a week and hopefully this hiatus is giving the vaccine manufacturers time to produce more for us. This week we have been given just 42 vaccines which clearly is not going to dent the sides.

The cynical person may take a view that the vaccination hubs are being favored at the moment. We have been told by NHS England that Cohort 5 (65s and over) will be invited to vaccination hubs and that we should concentrate on Cohort 6. Now then, does anyone know what Cohort 6 is? I thought I did but recently it has been updated which I suspect will frustrate a lot of people - this is lifted directly from a document published on 13th February 2021

Adults aged 16 to 65 years in an at-risk group which includes:

- Chronic respiratory disease
- Chronic heart disease and vascular disease
- Chronic kidney disease
- Chronic liver disease
- Chronic neurological disease, including severe or profound learning disability
- Diabetes mellitus
- Immunosuppression
- Asplenia or dysfunction of the spleen
- Morbid obesity
- Severe mental illness

Younger adults in long-stay in-patient, nursing and residential care settings

Adult carers: Those who are eligible for a carer's allowance, or those who are the sole or primary carer of an elderly or disabled person who is at increased risk of COVID-19 mortality and therefore clinically vulnerable.

I have previously referred to Cohort 6 as those that would normally be invited for a flu jab but the vaccination committee have decided that well-controlled asthmatics are at no more risk than non-asthmatics in their age group. There is a suggestion apparently that inhaled steroids may even be protective. Hence this is the an extract from the same document referring to the asthma patients that are included:

“anyone who has ever had an emergency asthma admission or those who have an asthma diagnosis and have had 3 prescriptions for oral steroids over a 3-month period (each prescription must fall within separate individual month windows), as an indication of repeated or continuous oral steroids.”

I know that this will really disappoint a lot of asthmatics who have lived through Covid with a heightened sense of vulnerability who are now being told that a year of fear was in vain and won't be alleviated by a vaccine imminently. We have been talking within the PCN that “an asthmatic is an asthmatic” and will continue to argue this point but the powers that be are being very stern about it. We are trying to play the game a bit and do what we can

to ensure that we get as good a supply of vaccine as possible as a priority. By doing this we can get to all asthmatics as soon as possible and if our argument wins or the government softens we will be able to change our position. Clearly if we have any spare vaccines we will invite anyone we can to ensure there is no wastage.

Those in Cohort 5 who can't attend a vaccination centre can be vaccinated at the surgery so please email us if that applies to you so that we can fit you in - kmccg.woodchurchsurgery@nhs.net . In view of the reduced vaccine we are receiving we would ask you genuinely to take up the vaccination centre offer and only contact us if there is no possible way you can get to the vaccination centre.

To the 379 registered Asthmatics please bear with me and don't shoot the messenger!
There is a really positive community spirit so please don't let this set back get in the way...

Best wishes to you all

Jack Hickey GP - on behalf of Woodchurch Surgery