



Dear colleagues,

Professional responsibility to reduce risk of COVID-19 infection to patients.

Your dedication and that of all of the NHS and wider healthcare system to providing the best possible care to patients in the challenging circumstances of the last 2 years has been remarkable, and a testament to you and your commitment to the health of those in your care. Thank you.

One aspect of that is the professional responsibility to reduce the risk of infection to others as far as possible. Getting vaccinated against diseases which can be passed person-to-person in healthcare settings is part of that responsibility.

Questions of professional responsibility and legal mandation are separate. Mandation is rightly for Ministers and Parliament. The professional responsibility, which is for the professions, predated discussion of mandation, and is widely agreed by professional bodies, Colleges, regulators and others. The public reasonably expect it of those who care for them or their vulnerable relatives because it is one of the simplest things that we, as healthcare workers, can do to protect patients.

The COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective, with over 10billion doses given worldwide. They provide a very high degree of protection from serious disease.

They also provide protection from becoming infected. We all know that this protection from infection is not absolute, just as almost every treatment you provide improves the chances of, but does not guarantee, a good outcome. Professional healthcare is about maximising the chance of a good outcome. Whilst we can be infected if vaccinated, getting vaccinated reduces that risk, particularly after your booster dose, and if you are not infected you cannot pass the virus on to your patients. There is now good evidence that being vaccinated provides additional protection to those who have had a prior infection from being infected again.

Risk benefit in every age group employed in the NHS is in favour of vaccination. If you have concerns we would urge you to get advice from people with particular knowledge of vaccines, your employers or occupational health to talk through risk and benefit to you as well as your patients and colleagues.

Our professional responsibility is to get the COVID-19 vaccines as recommended, to protect our patients. At the same time the vaccine protects us. The great majority of healthcare workers have already done so. We hope those of you who have not will consider doing so now.

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