Fairseat Foundation

Fairseat News –Monday, 29th March 2021

Vaccinations - We were hoping that Gertrudes Children's Hospital (GCH) were going to vaccinate all residents today & as many staff as they can. We learnt a short time ago that they have not yet received the resupply of vaccines from the Government stores & so cancelled. They are expecting to be able to come tomorrow -we will plan on that basis. In the mean time please see below for further information about the vaccination program.

Frequently asked questions about the vaccine – I have sourced most of this information from the Aga Khan University Hospital website. There are many other sources of information available if you want to do your own enquiries. There is also a "myth buster" online site that you may find helpful if you are interested:

https://www.britishima.org/operation-vaccination/hub/covidmyths/#ATM

- **Where will vaccines be administered? –** on the verandah of the guest apartment – time to be confirmed
- **What will it cost**? – there is no charge for the vaccine.
- **Which vaccine is it?** – it is the Oxford / AstraZeneca vaccine.
- **Is it mandatory to get vaccinated against Covid-19**? - It is not mandatory to be vaccinated but as a retirement community we have a duty of care to our residents. Any staff who have reasons for refusing the vaccine should apply to Ben for an exemption. Notwithstanding any possible exemptions, staff who refuse to get vaccinated will be sent on unpaid leave until it is considered safe for them to return to work without risking the health of residents.
- **How effective is the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine**? - In the different clinical trials conducted, this vaccine has been shown to protect against symptomatic infections with an efficacy ranging between 60% and 90%. According to an analysis published in The Lancet, this difference may be due to the interval between both doses: a longer interval (12 weeks) protects better (above 80%) than an interval below 6 weeks (under 60%). Most importantly, to date, no hospitalizations or deaths have been registered among people who received both doses of the Oxford / AstraZeneca vaccine in clinical trials.
- **Does the Oxford / AstraZeneca vaccine protect against the new viral variants**? - According to preliminary results obtained in the UK, this vaccine maintains a high efficacy against the "British" (B1.1.7) variant. In contrast, its capacity to protect against symptomatic infections caused by the variant first identified in South Africa (B1.351) seems to be much lower (around 25%) according to a small clinical trial in RSA. Still, it is hoped that it will protect against hospitalisation and death, since to date no cases of hospitalisation or death by COVID-19 have been reported in people who have received both doses of the vaccine in clinical trials. Even in South Africa, the vaccine prevented severe disease.
- **Why is the Oxford / AstraZeneca vaccine not given to older people in some countries**? - The European Medicines Agency approved the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine for use in all ages from 18 years onwards. However, some European countries (including Spain) have decided not to use the vaccine in people above 55 years of age because the clinical trials did not include enough people in this age group in order to draw firm conclusions. Nevertheless, the United Kingdom is using this vaccine even in people above 80 years of age, and the first data from Scotland show that it works well in the elderly: four weeks after the first dose, a 90% decrease in hospitalizations is observed.
- **How long does it take to be protected by the Oxford / AstraZeneca vaccine**? - Preliminary results from Scotland show that the Oxford / AstraZeneca vaccine drastically reduced COVID-19 hospitalizations (by 94%) one month after the first dose, even in persons above 80 years of age. However, this does not mean one dose is enough since it is not clear how long the protection would last after one single dose.
- **How does the vaccine work**? - Viral vector-based vaccines use the body's own cells to produce antigens. They do this by using a modified virus (the vector) to deliver the genetic code for the antigen, which then triggers an immune response. The vaccine mimics what happens during natural infection with certain pathogens — especially viruses. This has the advantage of triggering a strong cellular immune response by T cells as well as the production of antibodies by B cells.

- **What are the contra-indications to the administration of the vaccine**?
    - Hypersensitivity to the active substance or to any of the excipients. Note that none of the currently available vaccines include human or animal products. Thus, egg allergy is NOT a contraindication.
    - A positive IgG test (i.e., having been exposed to the disease) is not an exclusion criterion for vaccination; available data suggest that previously infected individuals can be at risk of COVID-19 reinfection and could benefit from vaccination.
    - The administration of COVID-19 vaccines should be postponed in individuals suffering from acute severe febrile illness.
    - Individuals with bleeding disorders may receive a COVID-19 vaccine if considered safe to do so by a physician familiar with the individual's bleeding risk.
- **What are the side effects of the vaccine**?
    - Injection site tenderness (>60%); injection site pain, headache, fatigue (>50%); myalgia, malaise (>40%); pyrexia, chills (>30%); and arthralgia, nausea (>20%).
    - The majority of adverse reactions were mild to moderate in severity and usually resolved within one to two days of vaccination. By day 7 the incidence of subjects with at least one local or systemic reaction was 4% and 13%, respectively.
    - When compared with the first dose, adverse reactions reported after the second dose were milder and reported less frequently.
- **How do I obtain help if I get side effects**? – If you are at Fairseat, see the duty nurse or the care manager. If you have left Fairseat, then phone the nurse or Care Manager.
- **How many doses should one take**? Two doses 4-12 weeks apart are administered. In Kenya, the doses shall be 8 weeks apart.
- **Is the vaccine safe in pregnancy and breastfeeding**?
    - Pregnancy - There is a limited experience with the use of COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca in pregnant women. Administration of COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca in pregnancy should only be considered when the potential benefits outweigh any potential risks for the mother and fetus.
    - Breastfeeding - There is evidence from some vaccines that the breast-feeding baby may acquire a level of protection. The vaccine is recommended for use during breast feeding.
    - Fertility - Preliminary animal studies do not indicate direct or indirect harmful effects with respect to fertility.
- **Are the vaccines effective against new strains of the SARS COV-2 virus**? - It is possible that the vaccine has reduced efficacy against some of the new strains, but very likely, even for those strains, that the recipient will be protected from severe disease. While further work is ongoing in this field, the advice is to continue with the vaccination as planned
- **I'm currently ill with COVID-19, can I get the vaccine**? - People currently unwell and experiencing COVID-19 symptoms should not receive the COVID-19 vaccine until they have recovered. If you are unsure, speak to Lucy Mwaura.
- **Should I get vaccinated if I have already had COVID-19**? - Yes, you should get vaccinated against COVID-19 even if you have already had the disease. However, if you are currently infected, you must wait for your symptoms to resolve, your isolation period to end and if you were prescribed steroids, these must also have ended. This applies to either of the doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.
- **Should I continue taking infection prevention precautions after vaccination**?
  Yes, you should continue with the usual precautions of wearing face masks, physical distancing, cough etiquette, use of PPEs and hand hygiene.

If you have concerns that are not answered above please see Ben. Staff who want to apply for a vaccine exemption should apply in the first instance in writing to Ben at the earliest opportunity. Please clearly state your reasons for requesting an exemption.