

Welcome to the August 2021 CPWY Committee Blog!

*Flu Season 2021/22*

In what is being billed as the biggest flu season ever for community pharmacy with huge stock orders already placed for flu jabs and the eager anticipation of our pharmacists and their teams... we are fast approaching that important, but crazy, time of year again. It is set to be a flu season with additional challenges for us all.

We suspect that the 2021 - 2022 influenza season in the UK [could be up to 50% larger than typically seen](#) and it is also possible that the 2021 - 2022 influenza season will begin earlier than usual. **We need to ensure that we offer the NHS flu vaccine as early as possible to our patients.**

Flu vaccination will not be the only vaccination we need to discuss with our patients. Seasonal influenza and COVID-19 viruses have the potential to add substantially to the winter pressures, particularly if infection waves from both viruses coincide. We need to encourage patients also eligible for a COVID-19 booster to access the booster when they are notified they are eligible – this is in line with the 2021/22 [PQS Health Inequality Criterion](#). Patients may also be eligible for other vaccines too, such as pneumonia and we need to ensure they are as protected. **We need to encourage patients to take up offers of other vaccinations, including COVID-19 boosters.**

I firmly believe it should always be the patient's choice to get their flu jab at the practitioner they would like to go to, that may be the one they have best access to, and that we should all ensure we are not unduly influencing this for any individual in our own day to day practices. Patient choice is the foundation of today's National Health Service; and ensuring that patients are enabled to make a choice that suits their lifestyle and meets their needs should underpin delivery of any service.

CPWY and the West Yorkshire LMCs have discussed the importance of choice and that patients should be encouraged to get their flu vaccination as soon as possible from whichever provider is most convenient for them. Neither profession should seek to deter or dissuade a patient from using a specific sector. If you are aware of any examples where health professionals are seeking to influence patient choice, please report these to [info@cpwy.org](mailto:info@cpwy.org). General Practice and pharmacy are both private businesses and are both facing pressures to deliver services and maintain income, however **if we work together to reach as many patients as possible then all services will have a successful flu season.**

Collaborative working should be assisted by the aligned flu incentives, for PCNs and General Practice through the Impact and Investment Fund (IIF), and community pharmacy via the PQS Flu PCN Criterion (similar to what we did last year), to work together to increase the number of eligible people vaccinated. **It is more important than ever that we are working together to ensure patients are vaccinated against flu during 2021/22.**

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The flu service offered in community pharmacies is a huge success story, particularly over the last few years and those of us that have been in the profession long enough will recall the efforts it took to bring it about on a national level.

The number of people across all ages and target groups getting their flu jabs grows year on year, therefore reducing the pressures on our A&E departments during the winter months and community pharmacy has had a massive part to play in this. Flu is just one of our Advanced Services and we have seen Government and NHS England & NHS Improvement show their commitment to bringing about new funded services for community pharmacy in recent times (e.g. CPCS and DMS). The huge part that community pharmacy played in being the main healthcare access point during the lockdowns in this COVID-19 pandemic for most patients has also been widely acknowledged. It would be right to assume there will be more funded services to be commissioned for community pharmacy over the next few years that give patients more choice about where and how they access these, and we as a profession should be ready to deliver.

The COVID-19 pandemic has left us with many lessons, one of the most important ones I feel is that the everyday help that pharmacists and their teams provide to patients accessing services and improving their health impacts us all as a society and country as a whole.

*In the case of flu jabs... where patients get their jab is not as important as improving vaccine uptake overall and therefore protecting patients, their loved ones and the wider community.*

**So, this flu season may have its additional challenges and complexities but community pharmacy I am sure will continue to make a positive impact and deliver our best flu year yet.**

**Sab Shah**

**[Committee Member of Community Pharmacy West Yorkshire](#)**