

Issue 1: Guidance for Nursing, Midwifery and Nursing Associate Students in relation to the Covid19 vaccine, December 2021

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Introduction

Under plans announced by the Health and Social Care Secretary, it will be mandatory for all frontline health workers ([click here for full press release](#)) to be 'double jabbed' with the COVID-19 vaccine in order to be able to work in clinical practice settings by April 2022. The measure builds on previously announced regulations which has made COVID-19 vaccination a mandatory condition of employment for all staff working in all areas in CQC-registered care homes in England. This mandatory requirement relates to all nursing, midwifery and nursing associate students.

It is really important for students and staff to understand that the decision to bring in this mandatory condition of employment has been made by the Government. It has not been made by any University or the NHS. Prior to making this decision, the Government consulted widely and considered responses to this consultation and advice from senior officials and NHS leaders across the UK. The Council of Deans of Health, representing all Universities offering education for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals, has issued a position statement expressing their concerns at this decision ([click here for press release from the Council of Deans](#)).

This document is intended to provide information to future students who will be affected by the requirement for all frontline healthcare workers to have the covid vaccination. It provides the current best evidence in relation to areas of concern expressed by students and other healthcare workers, in order to allow future students to make an informed decision on an individual basis.

It is important to acknowledge that this guidance document and the events above are intended to support individual decisions, within the context of the mandatory requirement. It is important to be clear that the requirements means unvaccinated students will not be accepted onto nursing, midwifery or nursing associate programmes, at Middlesex University or at any other UK university.

Student placements across the BSc Nursing and Midwifery and the PGDip Mental Health programmes are streamed with 50% of students in placement at any one point of the year. All placement opportunities require direct contact with patients / service users and hence we are advising that all prospective students are required to be fully vaccinated by **September 2022** so that there is time to ensure all records are reviewed prior to the start of their clinical placements.

Areas of concern:

There are a number of areas of concern that have been expressed in relation to the vaccine by students, healthcare professionals and the wider population. Current best evidence from lead national bodies is given below, with links for further information.

- **Fertility**

It is acknowledged this is a concern for students and healthcare professionals.

The covid vaccine was introduced in the UK in early 2021. There was a small amount of evidence from the trials before this, that there was no effect on fertility. As the vaccines are being used more widely there is more evidence that this is the case. The British Fertility Society advise that *“there is absolutely no evidence, and no theoretical reason, that any of the vaccines can affect the fertility of women or men. This includes whether you are trying on your own or having fertility treatment.”*

The covid vaccine does not contain the virus.

For further information: British Fertility Society <https://www.britishfertilitysociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Covid19-Vaccines-FAQ-2.1.pdf>

- **Impact on pregnancy**

As the covid vaccines are new vaccines, there were no studies on the long term effects of the vaccine on babies when the mother has had the vaccine during pregnancy. Now however, in the UK and USA alone, over 200,000 pregnant women now been vaccinated, with no adverse effects on the woman, pregnancy or baby.

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists advise that *“as COVID-19 vaccines are not ‘live’ vaccines they cannot cause infection, and other non-live vaccines have been given to women in pregnancy for many years without any safety concerns”*. Additionally *“Studies have shown that protective antibodies from vaccination do cross the placenta, helping with the baby’s immunity to COVID-19. We know that catching COVID-19 during pregnancy can cause severe illness in a pregnant woman, especially in the third trimester – that’s why we recommend the COVID-19 vaccine in pregnancy.”*

The risk to maternal health from COVID-19 for non-vaccinated pregnant women is considerable. The Royal College of Midwives advise that *“Pregnant women are at risk of getting severely ill with COVID-19, particularly in the third trimester with new data from the UK Obstetric Surveillance System (UKOSS) showing that 1 in 10 pregnant women admitted to hospital with symptoms of COVID-19 need intensive care”*.

For further information: <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/guidelines-research-services/coronavirus-covid-19-pregnancy-and-womens-health/covid-19-vaccines-and-pregnancy/covid-19-vaccines-pregnancy-and-breastfeeding/> and

Royal College of Midwives <https://www.rcm.org.uk/guidance-for-pregnant-women/>

- **Breastfeeding**

It is acknowledged this is a concern for students and healthcare professionals.

The covid vaccine was introduced in the UK in early 2021, and data shows there are no negative effects on either the breastfeeding mother or the baby.

The Royal College of Midwives advise that *“If you planning a pregnancy, are in the immediate postnatal period or breastfeeding, you can be vaccinated with any vaccine. You should not stop breastfeeding in order to be vaccinated against COVID-19”*

- **Religion**

It is acknowledged this is a concern for students and healthcare professionals.

There is no ‘main-stream’ religion that is against the vaccine.

There may be individuals in positions of influence or authority in religious groups or organisations who hold particular views on vaccination, specifically the covid vaccine, but religious leaders from main-stream religions do not oppose the vaccine, in fact they encourage it.

For further information:

- <https://britishima.org/operation-vaccination/hub/covidmyths/>
- <https://mycatholicdoctor.com/our-services/vaccines/>
- <http://www.hinducounciluk.org/2021/01/19/supporting-nationwide-vaccination-programme/>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/feb/07/faith-leaders-join-to-counter-fears-over-vaccine-among-bame-communities>
- <https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/news-and-statements/bishops-lead-churches-call-take-covid-vaccine>
- <https://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/chief-rabbi-it-is-a-religious-imperative-to-get-vaccinated-if-offered/>

- **View the vaccine as being ineffective**

The vaccine is effective in reducing the risk of catching the virus, and in reducing the effect of the virus if it is caught. Every week, updated information is published to show how well the vaccine is working in the ‘real-world’ situation in UK. With all vaccines, protection is more against severe disease than against mild disease. The latest data shows that after two doses of the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine, 60-70% will be protected against all symptomatic disease and over 90% are protected against hospitalization or death. After the Pfizer vaccine, 80-95% are protected against any symptomatic disease and over 90% against hospitalisation or death. If you are fully vaccinated, but do become infected, you are less likely to pass on the infection than someone who was not vaccinated. The effectiveness of the vaccines does wane over time, but a booster dose produces a high level of immunity, perhaps even greater than immediately after the first two doses.

- **Needle phobia**

- There is considerable expertise in supporting people who are nervous, scared or needle phobic at vaccination centres. Middlesex University staff have provided the education for vaccinators in North Central London, and supported the centres throughout this year.

- Timing in relation to other vaccines / treatments

It is very uncommon for different vaccines to interact with each other or with other treatments, unless they are live vaccines. All of the COVID-19 vaccines have been made in such a way that they are not live. Therefore there is no reason to think that they would interact with any other vaccines or treatment. At least one study has looked at giving flu and COVID vaccines together and found no problems. The only vaccines that should not be given at the same time as the COVID-19 vaccines are shingles vaccines, where a seven day gap should be left.

- **View that the vaccine is of animal origin, containing meat derivatives** None of the vaccines contain animal products, so are suitable for vegetarians and vegans. They have however been tested on animals. The Vegan Society supports the use of the vaccines - <https://www.vegansociety.com/news/news/vegan-society-response-covid-19-vaccine>.

For general information about the vaccines, their development, testing and efficacy answered by Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Professor Jonathan Van-Tam please see:

<https://healthmedia.blog.gov.uk/2021/03/12/covid19vaccines-faqs/>

Decision making

If, after consideration you do wish to have the covid vaccine this can be booked in via the link below:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/>
