EFOMP's corner

COVID-19 vaccination rates of medical physicists throughout Europe

The European Matters committee has designed a survey on Covid-19 vaccination among medical physicists in Europe. The survey was initiated by the President of EFOMP (Paddy Gilligan) and the Secretary General (Efi Koutsouveli), and was prepared with the assistance of the Past Secretary General (Jaroslav Ptáček).

The aim of the survey was to evaluate the status of vaccination among medical physicists in various EFOMP member countries as we believe that the vaccine will have benefits for patient safety maintaining treatment and diagnostics for the services we, as medical physicists, contribute to, as well as making us safe and able to exchange ideas in person. Out of 36 EFOMP member countries, 27 NMOs have answered by the deadline (2nd of February 2021). All answers were processed confidentially, without disclosing the NMO's country of origin.

Fig. 1 illustrates the current status of vaccination on a country level and among medical physicists (MP). In 23 countries the vaccination campaign has already started, while 4 expect the start of vaccination

soon (Jan-March 2021). Six countries reported a high vaccination rate among medical physicists (over 75%), other 6 countries reported a rate between 50 and 75%, while in 9 countries the vaccination rate is below 50%. Two responding countries had no reliable data to report in this regard.

Most countries stated that emergency (frontline) healthcare workers, healthcare workers in general and elderly have priority for vaccination. In 23 out of 27 countries medical physicists are receiving the vaccine as part of healthcare workers. Of these, in 6 countries MPs are included in the frontline healthcare workers, while in other 6 countries only certain MP categories are considered in the frontline (medical physicists who might be exposed to COVID patients - e.g. diagnostic physicists; emergency radiology workers).

It is considered that during the vaccination programme (by June/July), six countries will reach a 100% vaccination rate among MPs, 12 countries – over 50% rate, while for 9 countries this forecast is uncertain/unknown.

A number of countries also answered to the question regarding the need for EFOMP support of the NMOs during the vaccination programme. Below are some of the answers:

Fig. 1. The current status of vaccination among medical physicists from EFOMP member countries.

- By supporting them with the vaccination if their country doesn't cover it.
- Circulate the answers to the FAQs about the vaccines where people have concerns to encourage maximum uptake.
- More information about vaccination, types and modality.
- Possibly by promoting the safety of the vaccine among EFOMP members and members of national medical physics societies.
- By providing more information on contraindications and applicability of different vaccines.
- Clarifying the professional risk for the medical physicists and providing more information about different kind of vaccines.
- Sharing the up to date information related to the COVID-19 vaccination.
- EFOMP can use the data from NMOs to influence and persuade the authorities that Medical Physicists are in the frontline health workers thus they should be included in the vaccination programme.
- Send supporting statements to show our involvement with patients and that vaccine is important for the profession.
- Promote designation of clinical medical physicists as healthcare workers within the patient pathway and hence support the need to vaccinate medical physicists as part of an overall protection programme for all in the healthcare community and society in general.

As shown by the survey results, while some countries are more advanced in their vaccination programme, others are only starting the campaign with the hope to cover frontline healthcare workers and high-risk groups in the forthcoming months. A number of NMOs consider that EFOMP could support the vaccination programme in various countries by providing more information on the vaccine's efficacy, safety as well as societal effects in order to encourage vaccination and to curb the current pandemic.

Loredana Marcu is Professor of Medical Physics

at the University of Oradea, Romania and Adjunct Professor at School of Health Sciences, University of South Australia. She received her PhD in Medical Physics from the University of Adelaide, and her Masters degree in Applied Physics from the West University of Timisoara, Romania. During her Australian experience, she has coordinated the LDR brachytherapy programme at the Royal Adelaide Hospital. She was also a TEAP preceptor supervising and coordinating the medical physics training and education of the junior physicists in South Australia. Her 20 years teaching experience at both Australian and Romanian universities has materialised in 16 books/book chapters published on physics, radiobiology and teaching methodologies. She has over 200 peer-reviewed publications and conference presentation. Dr. Marcu is the recipient of the "Boyce Worthley award 2006" given by the Australasian College of Physical Scientists and Engineers in Medicine for her achievements in the areas of radiobiology and medical physics. She is the current chair of the European Matters Committee within EFOMP and co-chair of WiMPBME (Women in Medical Physics and Biomedical Engineering) within IUPESM.

Loredana G. Marcu, Report from the Chair of EFOMP's European Matters Committee