

Media release

Friday 29 October 2021

Hospital Pharmacists welcome imminent COVID-19 vaccine booster program

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) welcomes yesterday's joint announcement by Prime Minister Scott Morrison, Health Minister Greg Hunt and Chief Medical Officer Professor Paul Kelly that Australia's COVID-19 vaccine booster program will commence within two weeks, with hospital pharmacists and their colleagues among the first to be eligible due to their frontline roles treating the most acutely unwell COVID-19 patients.

The booster program will begin on Monday 8 November, after the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) yesterday released recommendations on the use of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine as a booster for Australians at greatest risk of severe COVID-19 disease, or who are at increased occupational risk of COVID-19.

SHPA Chief Executive Kristin Michaels says 'There are 6,000 pharmacists working in hospitals around Australia who have been expecting this news and, alongside their nursing, medical and allied health colleagues, will welcome this decision by ATAGI and the Australian Government with sleeves rolled up.

'Hospital Pharmacists were the first cohort of pharmacists to be vaccinated from April, with Emergency Medicine Pharmacists and Intensive Care Pharmacists – the very first to complete their primary two-dose COVID-19 vaccine course – now qualified for a booster having reached the six-month mark since their second shot.'

ATAGI recommends a single booster dose is administered for those who completed their primary COVID-19 vaccine course over six months ago, with Pfizer's currently the preferred booster vaccine for all Australians.

The recommendation will be reviewed in January 2022, as further cohorts of the Australian population reach their six-month interval and become eligible.

Ms Michaels says Hospital Pharmacists have been committed to the safe treatment of COVID-19 patients since the arrival of the pandemic in Australia.

'Over the past 18 months we have seen hundreds of Hospital Pharmacists and technicians in quarantine and self-isolation – some more than once – due to confirmed exposure to COVID-19. Unfortunately, there have also been a number in our profession infected with COVID-19 as they provided care to patients on the frontline.

'Hospital Pharmacists have upskilled and provided care to COVID-19 patients in emergency departments, intensive care units, COVID-19 wards, as well as COVID-19 Community Care Pathway models, to minimise risk and exposure to their colleagues and other patients.

'With added protection following a booster shot, Hospital Pharmacists will be able to protect themselves and more safely continue to provide care to hospitalised patients as we transition to living with COVID-19. We welcome their early inclusion in the booster program.'

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About SHPA

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) is the national, professional, for-purpose organisation for leading pharmacists and pharmacy technicians working across Australia's health system, advocating for their pivotal role improving the safety and quality of medicines use. Embedded in multidisciplinary medical teams and equipped with exceptional medicines management expertise, SHPA members are progressive advocates for clinical excellence, committed to evidence-based practice and passionate about patient care.

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