

RCEM statement on vaccine hesitancy

March 2021

As clinicians working in Emergency Departments, we are eager to ensure that all of our workforce – from doctors and nurses to support and security staff, cleaners, and porters – have equity of access and information regarding the coronavirus vaccine.

We acknowledge that there may be some historic mistrust in the vaccine amongst certain communities. A history of medical racism and structural inequalities have resulted in high levels of mistrust in the healthcare service. An unfortunate consequence of this is vaccine hesitancy.

We note the difference between anti-vax and those who are vaccine hesitant. Vaccine hesitancy is not necessarily irrational – it is nervousness, anxiety, and reasonable doubt that stems from a historic and well-evidenced reality that certain ethnic groups experience poorer outcomes when accessing healthcare.

Additionally, there may be barriers associated with access to vaccinations. Some members report that their Trusts have been encouraging staff to get vaccinated during shift hours with some success. We would like to highlight this as an area of good practice.

It is important to engage with staff members who may be hesitant in order to acknowledge and address their concerns. With this in mind, we encourage our Members and Fellows to proactively speak to colleagues who may be worried or vaccine hesitant. This issue must be approached with sensitivity and caution must be taken to avoid a narrative of blame against staff and ethnic minority groups. As Emergency Department important to role model and provide support to all staff working in the Emergency Department.

A message from Dr Katherine Henderson, President of the Royal College of Emergency Medicine:

“The protection of every staff member who works in the Emergency Department is a top priority for the College. We do not want any staff to remain at risk of contracting this disease – especially those who may be disproportionately affected.

“If you personally feel unsure or if you know a colleague who is unsure, please seek out information about the vaccine, its safety and effectiveness, and speak to colleagues.

“We must make information readily available and accessible for anyone who has questions. The College has pulled together some important resources, detailed below, to guide members to information and have these discussions.”

Important resources

Public health messaging for different cultural backgrounds. Available [here](#).

BBC News. Coronavirus vaccines explained in five different South Asian languages. Available [here](#).

Black Ballad. Understanding the COVID19 vaccination. Available [here](#).

Netrag+ - Episode 4: Navigating conversations regarding vaccine hesitancy.
Available on Spotify [here](#).