

UN MEDICAL DIRECTORS UN SYSTEM-WIDE COVID-19 VACCINATION PROGRAMME OCCUPATIONAL RISK GROUPS PRIORITIZATION

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As part of the overall strategy for distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, the UN Medical Directors (UNMD) recommend that specific occupational groups receive prioritization for vaccination that takes into account their risk profile as it relates to their work. This approach aligns with the principle of reciprocity as outlined in the ‘WHO SAGE values framework for the allocation and prioritization of COVID-19 Vaccination’. Reciprocity recognizes the obligations of the UN as a vaccine provider to those individuals and groups ‘who bear significant increased risks and burdens of COVID-19 response’ for the benefit of the UN family and those the UN family supports. From an Organizational perspective, prioritizing ‘at risk’ workers addresses each Organizations duty of care to provide staff with as safe a workplace as can reasonably be achieved. The objective is to ensure that those who are at increased risk, such as healthcare providers, vaccination staff, or frontline humanitarian workers are systematically identified and then prioritized for early vaccination if that is possible.

MATRIX METHODOLOGY

The Occupational Risk Matrix was developed using the following principles:

- It would be based on a WHO epidemiological risk profile of ‘community transmission’¹
- It would not include mitigation measures. The ‘worst case’ scenario was assumed given the variability of prevention/mitigation measures across organizations, locations, and functions.
- It would use broad categories of staff so as to not be onerous for individual duty stations to assess, categorize and count.
- It would follow a standard risk assessment methodology and focus on only two components:
 - The ‘exposure dose’ that the worker would commonly receive when exposed; and
 - The ‘exposure frequency’ that the worker would have.

Exposure dose: Describes the amount of virus that occurs with each contact. This includes considerations of how close, for how long, in what environment (such as indoors vs outdoors), and with who – i.e., is the contact a well person, a sick person, or is their status unknown.

Exposure frequency: Describes the number of contacts that occur with the work – the more contacts or the more ‘social connectivity’, the more likely transmission is to occur.

¹ Countries/area/territories experiencing large outbreaks of transmission defined through an assessment of factors including but not limited to transmission chains.

- large numbers of cases from sentinel laboratory surveillance or increasing positive tests through sentinel sites (not of respiratory samples from established laboratories);
- multiple unrelated clusters in several areas of the country/territory/area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This document outlined the rationale for proposing a UN COVID-19 Vaccine Occupational Risk Matrix for assisting in prioritizing COVID-19 vaccine delivery. UNMD recommends: