

**Brussels 23 December 2020**

### **BSMO recommendation on COVID-19 vaccination in patients with cancer**

On 21 December 2020, the EMA has approved the first COVID-19 vaccine (<https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/human-regulatory/overview/public-health-threats/coronavirus-disease-covid-19/treatments-vaccines-covid-19>).

Today, 22 December 2020, the European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO) has issued guidance on the COVID-19 vaccination in patients with cancer (<https://www.esmo.org/covid-19-and-cancer/covid-19-vaccination?hit=some>).

The BSMO acknowledges the impact of COVID-19 in patients with cancer and healthcare professionals. Therefore, we propose the following recommendations to guide healthcare professionals to discuss the COVID-19 vaccination strategy with their patients with cancer. These recommendations have been reviewed by the BSMO Executive Board members and external experts and they are based upon ESMO recommendations.

#### **1) Should all patients with cancer be vaccinated?**

Patients with a haematological malignancy requiring chemotherapy or an active, advanced solid tumour or a history of a solid tumour diagnosed less than 5 years ago should be vaccinated and should be prioritised for COVID-19 vaccination campaigns.

Of note, ESMO recommends vaccination regardless of age while the Health Council Belgium recommends vaccination for patients aged 45-65 years.

Patients can be vaccinated regardless of cancer treatment (no specific contra-indications formulated).

Patients who have had allogeneic stem cell transplantation in the absence of graft-versus-host disease (GvHD), usually can receive the vaccine 6 months post-stem cell transplantation.

**2) Should healthcare professionals be prioritized in vaccination campaigns?**

Healthcare professionals caring for patients with cancer should be prioritised in COVID-19 vaccination campaigns.

**3) Can any COVID-19 vaccine be administered?**

Only EMA approved vaccines should be administered in vaccination programs. Importantly, the vaccination programme must foresee a pharmacovigilance plan.

**4) Are there any risks involved for patients with cancer taking the COVID-19 vaccine?**

At this moment, there are no obvious safety concerns for the approved COVID-19 vaccines. However, patients with cancer who are vaccinated, should be followed-up for potential adverse events and complications during and/or after cancer treatments since possible interactions with cancer therapies are not entirely known.

**5) Are all COVID-19 vaccines effective and for how long?**

The efficacy and duration of immunity in patients with cancer are still unknown at this moment and this should be monitored either by dedicated clinical trials or by country registry.

**6) Keeping basic pandemic measures:**

Importantly, even with the COVID-19 vaccination programme, physical distancing, mouth and nose masks, face shields, sanitizers and other hygiene measures are still required.

For more information and full report on the ESMO guidelines, we invite you to read them at [COVID-19 vaccination \(esmo.org\)](https://www.esmo.org/COVID-19/vaccination).

For information in Belgium:

[https://www.health.belgium.be/sites/default/files/uploads/fields/fpshealth\\_theme\\_file/css\\_9597\\_cp\\_vaccination\\_strategy\\_covid\\_19\\_0.pdf](https://www.health.belgium.be/sites/default/files/uploads/fields/fpshealth_theme_file/css_9597_cp_vaccination_strategy_covid_19_0.pdf)

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