

FDI Council Statement on COVID-19 Vaccination

25 February 2021

COVID-19 continues to have a severe impact on global health, society and economies. Vaccines are essential in fighting the pandemic as they can protect people from getting ill and ease reliance on non-pharmaceutical public health measures, such as service closures and stay-at-home ordersⁱ. Several COVID-19 vaccines have been approved for use, having proven safe and effective in large-scale clinical trials. Over 200 other vaccine candidates are in various stages of developmentⁱⁱ. As of late January 2021, nearly 100 million COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered in over 50 countries, mostly to vulnerable populations such as the elderly and at-risk groups like healthcare workersⁱⁱⁱ.

As countries begin implementing vaccination programmes, there is a need to highlight several considerations relating to dental services and the oral health workforce. Oral health is a fundamental component of overall health and wellbeing^{iv,v} and oral health care is an essential public service. Vaccination of dentists, their team members and other oral health professionals is important to contribute to continued access to care. Dentists are also highly trained professionals that have regular interactions with people about their health, and are therefore well positioned to support national vaccination programmes.

Considering these points, FDI Council asserts the following key principles related to dentistry and COVID-19 vaccination:

1. Dentists, other oral health professionals and support staff are front-line providers of an essential health care service and should therefore be included in priority vaccination groups. They are in regular contact with each other and the patients who visit their healthcare facilities. If they contract COVID-19, it can result in practice or clinic closures. Including them in priority vaccination groups is therefore important for avoiding oral health workforce dropout and jeopardizing access to care.
2. Equitable access to COVID-19 vaccinations is needed for the health of people globally, including vulnerable populations and healthcare workers. To this end, FDI Council fully supports initiatives to improve access to vaccines in underserved localities, such as the COVAX facility being co-led by GAVI, WHO and CEPI^{vi}.
3. Efforts should be made to enable dentists to administer COVID-19 vaccines when possible within national legislation and regulations, and with minimal disruption to oral health care services. Several countries have already confirmed that dentists will be permitted to administer COVID-19 vaccinations, including in countries where dentists have not previously been permitted to give vaccines^{vii}.
4. Dentists are well positioned to provide evidence-based information about vaccination and may receive questions from their patients about COVID-19 vaccines. Health authorities and National Dental Associations should ensure dentists, their team members, other oral health providers and dental students



have access to accurate, up to date information on the vaccines available in their country or locality and the specificities of the vaccination programme in place.

5. Given the expected large number of vaccine approvals and high population uptake in the near future, there may be a higher number of suspected adverse drug reactions than in normal times. Dentists can play an important role in pharmacovigilance programmes. Health authorities and National Dental Associations should ensure dentists are well informed of national pharmacovigilance systems and methods for reporting suspected adverse events.

FDI Council expresses its sincere thanks to all oral health professionals, National Dental Associations and other members of the global oral health community for their dedication in responding to the ongoing crisis.

Please visit the [FDI COVID-19 RESOURCE LIBRARY](#) for access to practical resources and more information on the outbreak.

ⁱ World Health Organization. *Vaccines and Immunization: What is Vaccination?* Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/vaccines-and-immunization-what-is-vaccination> [Accessed 2 February 2021].

ⁱⁱ GAVI: The Vaccine Alliance. *The COVID-19 Vaccine Race – Weekly update, 27 Jan 2021*. Available from: <https://www.gavi.org/vaccineswork/covid-19-vaccine-race> [Accessed 2 February 2021].

ⁱⁱⁱ Ritchie H, Ortiz-Ospina E, Beltekian D, et al. *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Vaccinations*. Available from: <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-vaccinations> [Accessed 2 February 2021].

^{iv} Glick M, Williams DM, Kleinman DV, Vujicic M, Watt RG, Weyant RJ. A new definition for oral health developed by the FDI World Dental Federation opens the door to a universal definition of oral health. *Int Dent J* 2016 66: 322-324.

^v World Health Organization. Oral Health: Achieving better oral health as part of the universal health coverage and noncommunicable disease agendas towards 2030. Report by the Director General. *Executive Board 148th Session 2020*. Available from: https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB148/B148_8-en.pdf [Accessed 5 February 2021].

^{vi} GAVI: The Vaccine Alliance. *COVAX Facility*. Available from: <https://www.gavi.org/covax-facility#what> [Accessed 2 February 2021].

^{vii} In a survey of 57 National Dental Associations conducted by FDI in December 2020 and January 2021, 17% reported that their country has already confirmed that dentists are or will be permitted to administer COVID-19 vaccinations.