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LOCAL GPs ON BOARD TO ROLL OUT COVID-19 VACCINES
Joint AMA, Department of Health, RACGP & ACRRM media release

More than 4,500 accredited general practices will participate in Phase 1b of Australia’s COVID-19 rollout, one of the greatest logistical challenges in our nation’s history.

The plans were announced by Minister for Health and Aged Care, Greg Hunt today, with the collaboration of the Australian Medical Association (AMA), The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP), and the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM).

Minister for Health and Aged Care, Greg Hunt said the Government is committed to bringing on board all eligible practices as quickly as possible, with vaccination start dates set to be staggered and dosage allocation to be dependent on vaccine availability.

“More than 1,000 general practices will commence from the week of 22 March 2021, with a rapid scale up over the following four weeks. This will ensure an efficient and equitable distribution of vaccines across the country,” Minister Hunt said.

“Phase 1b of the rollout includes vulnerable populations, such as older people and people with certain underlying conditions.”

No-one is better placed in the community than local GPs, who will play a major role in ensuring all Australians who seek to be vaccinated have access to safe and effective COVID19 vaccines.

President of the AMA, Dr Omar Khorshid said “General Practitioners have a proven track record with flu vaccination of older Australians and those living with chronic disease who will make up the bulk of the Phase 1B rollout.

“It is very pleasing to see the majority of GPs putting up their hands to participate in this critical national program.

“General practice is highly accessible for people and has helped Australia achieve some of the highest rates of vaccination in the world.

“Patients see their GP for trusted advice and support and rolling out a COVID-19 vaccine through general practice is the best way to encourage the community to get vaccinated.”

RACGP president, Dr Karen Price said the approach is built on a platform of trust and knowledge.

“This is an historic and logistically-challenging project and GPs across the country are honoured to contribute and committed to ensuring that all eligible patients have access to the vaccine, no matter where they live.

“We already have the trust of our patients and our communities and can ensure that those who are ready to be vaccinated can be, and those who are unsure can have their questions answered to help them decide.”

The staged commencement of general practices will be complemented by GP-led Respiratory Clinics and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services working together to deliver vaccines to eligible priority populations.

In welcoming the announcement, ACRRM president, Dr Sarah Chalmers recognised the significant preparation undertaken in the leadup to rollout.

“ACRRM acknowledges the enormous amount of work that has been put into planning for the vaccination rollout, including for rural and remote communities.

The equitable distribution points across the country means that all our vulnerable patients can access the vaccine.”

Nationally, more than 130 Respiratory Clinics and over 300 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service sites will support the Phase 1b roll out. This adds to more than 5,000 points of presence across Australia in addition to vaccination clinics set up by states and territories.

Minister Hunt said, “It has been clear from the positive response to the EOI that GPs are both prepared and committed to support the natural COVID-19 vaccination effort as well, as their local communities.

“We also acknowledge the work of the Australian Medical Association, The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, and Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine who have been instrumental during this process,” Minister Hunt said.

Australia's COVID-19 Vaccine National Rollout Strategy is underpinned by multiple parts of the health system working together to contribute to the vaccination effort.

This will be further enhanced by pharmacies to ensure equitable and timely access across Australia.

The Australian Government thanks all practices that expressed an interest in participating in the COVID-19 vaccine rollout, and for their ongoing commitment to support their local community.

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