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**AMA WELCOMES TRANSPARENCY ON REVISED ATAGI ADVICE
 ON VACCINES**

Latest advice should not alarm AstraZeneca recipients, says AMA

The AMA acknowledges the latest advice from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) recommending the COVID-19 vaccine by Pfizer (Comirnaty) is preferred in adults under the age of 60 years.

The AMA says the change to our COVID-19 vaccine roll out is based on the latest medical evidence and advice.

“The Australian community can be reassured that the Commonwealth continues to take the advice of medical experts on how best to manage the risk of COVID-19 and target our vaccine roll out,” AMA President, Dr Omar Khorshid said.

“ATAGI has decided the AstraZeneca vaccine should be used for those patients who are 60 years of age and over based on an assessment of the current risks of COVID-19 in the community.

“With very low rates of community transmission, ATAGI has decided that Pfizer should be the preferred vaccine for anyone under the age of 60.

“People who have had the AstraZeneca vaccine should not be alarmed by this decision,” Dr Khorshid said.

“The risks of serious complications, including clotting, from the AstraZeneca vaccine are very low and Australia is now very good at detecting clots in patients who’ve had the AstraZeneca vaccine.

“More importantly, we have developed very effective protocols and treatments that mean most people fully recover from these complications.”

Dr Khorshid said around 3.8m doses have been administered around the country and the overwhelming majority of people report no, or only very mild, side effects.

“People who have had a first dose of Astra Zeneca must still have their second dose as recommended. The overseas evidence clearly shows that two doses of Astra Zeneca are needed to protect people against COVID-19 variants of concern including the Delta (Indian) strain,” Dr Khorshid said.

“With hundreds of millions of doses of AstraZeneca being administered in countries all over the world, we also know that the risks of clotting in second doses is negligible, about 1.5 in a million.

“We must remember that people who are aged 60 and over are at higher risk of becoming more seriously ill if they contract COVID-19 and for these people, ATAGI has decided the benefits of getting vaccinated with AstraZeneca outweigh any risks.

“If you are offered an AstraZeneca vaccine, you should take it up to protect yourself, your family and your friends.

“The risk of a large-scale outbreak of COVID-19 in Australia remains very significant and the community needs to come forward and get vaccinated.

“Until most Australians are vaccinated, we face the risks of more infections, more lockdowns and more restrictions.

“People who are unsure about the benefits of vaccinations should speak with their GP who can provide advice and support to help people come to an informed decision about vaccination

“These patients also need to be better supported by the introduction of a Medicare item to give them the opportunity to have a longer consultation with their GP, something that is not currently being funded adequately by the Government,” Dr Khorshid said.

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