

Transcript: AMA Vice President, Dr Chris Moy, Outlet: ABC News Breakfast, Monday, 30 May 2022

Subject: Flu vaccination program, pressure on public hospitals, COVID

LISA MILLAR: We want to get more on one of the main stories we've been following over the past few weeks, the rising number of people we're seeing getting the flu. New South Wales has become the latest state to offer free flu shots, joining WA, SA and Queensland. Dr Chris Moy is the Vice President of the Australian Medical Association, and he joins me now from Adelaide.

G'day Chris, good to see you again.

CHRIS MOY: Hi, good to see you, Lisa.

LISA MILLAR: What's going on with the vaccines, the flu vaccines? I know that we're seeing the states move to offer free vaccines. Are people reluctant to get them?

CHRIS MOY: Well, I think this is a big wake-up call after the- sort of, the mass delusion that was created in the election that there wasn't a hospital problem. Essentially, we've got this issue that there's relative complacency about both the flu and COVID and we are careering into our first proper flu season for three years with, you know, 3000 people in hospital with COVID at the same time. So really, it's a signal to everybody, look, we've got to take this seriously and get yourself boosted as far as your COVID, get your flu shot. And also be aware that there's all these anti-viral treatments for both COVID and for the flu, because what we need to do is actually make sure people stay well and don't end up in hospital because our hospitals are under enormous pressure.

LISA MILLAR: And why are people ending up in hospital with this particular flu? Are the symptoms worse than you've seen before? What's going on?

CHRIS MOY: Look, it's hard to gauge whether this is going to be a worse one or not. The history of flus is that after light flu seasons, we get a really bad one, and certainly we haven't had one for the last two seasons, so we'll get some characteristics about it. One thing that has been really obvious is that it's affected mainly the younger group between 15 and 24. Now, we're not sure whether that's got something to do with the virus itself, the strain itself, or whether it's got to do with the fact that they're the young ones wandering around and having fun while the other older ones are hunkering down.

But nevertheless, that's often the group that's not covered by the national flu immunisation program. So that's probably extra reason why the states are actually trying to plug the hole of all the people that aren't covered with a flu vaccine program for that group that isn't covered.

LISA MILLAR: Would the AMA like to see Anthony Albanese take the lead on this and make it a nationwide approach?

CHRIS MOY: Look, I think- you know, one could look at that, but I think from the federal point of view, what we need to see them do, which I think we have heard signals already- they've realised that they didn't want to mention hospitals during the election campaign, but they knew that was going to be the first thing off the bat. They really need to shore up the hospitals and back the Department of Health nationally to really make sure we particularly get the boosters going and really reinvigorate that booster program and also make sure that we also get the word out about these anti-viral treatments, which are there for both COVID- but they have to be taken first five days, or the flu, which have to be taken within the first 48 hours or so.

So we need that word out to get people protected, treatment early, but also they need to actually shore up the hospitals.

LISA MILLAR: And the offer is there for people to go to the GP or the pharmacy. Does the AMA have a preference? I mean, I went to the pharmacy to get my flu jab last week. We know GPs are very busy. Would you like to see people head to the chemist instead?

CHRIS MOY: It's a bit of an all hands on deck, really. I mean, if you're seeing your GP for something else, then that's a great time to get your flu shot. I think the main thing is that the next couple of days, both for GPs and pharmacies, just give them a chance to get going because this announcement has just happened. So be wary of just ringing both the GPs and the pharmacies up just today because it's going to be full on again. Every time we've had an announcement about some change to the flu vaccine, receptionists get inundated, so we just need to cut them a break in the first couple of days.

LISA MILLAR: Yeah, for sure. Patience, that's the buzz word. Hey, Chris Moy, have a good day. Thanks for joining us this morning.

CHRIS MOY: It's a pleasure.

30 May 2022

CONTACT: 02 6270 5478 0427 209 753 media@ama.com.au

Follow the AMA Media on Twitter: http://twitter.com/ama_media

Follow the AMA President on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/amapresident>

Like the AMA on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/AustralianMedicalAssociation>
