

Pharmacists and pharmacy staff experiencing unexplained delays receiving second vaccine dose



3 June 2021: The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) has expressed concern that many pharmacists and pharmacy staff are experiencing unexplained delays receiving a second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Outlining these concerns, IPU Secretary General Darragh O’Loughlin explained, “As frontline providers of healthcare it is vital that pharmacists and all pharmacy staff are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Following a sustained campaign by the IPU, first doses of vaccines were administered to pharmacists and pharmacy teams during the spring. However, at this stage, many of our members who received the Vaxzevria[®] (COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca) vaccine have gone well beyond the recommended 12 week dosing schedule and are in the dark about when they will get their second dose.

“NIAC and the HSE recommend that the booster dose of the Vaxzevria[®] (COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca) vaccine is administered 12 weeks after the first. In fact, NIAC Guidelines clearly state that if the interval between doses is longer than 12 weeks, the second dose should be given “as soon as possible” and they have recently advised the Minister for Health that the interval between first and second dose can be reduced from 12 weeks to 8 weeks.

Mr O’Loughlin continued: “Currently we are hearing from many pharmacy staff who have been waiting over 14 weeks and still are unsure when they will receive their second dose.

“What makes the situation even more pressing and urgent is that pharmacists are due to begin administering the COVID-19 vaccine in their pharmacies this month. Just like any other vaccinators, our members want to be fully protected when carrying out this work.

“Given the rising concerns about the COVID-19 variant first identified in India, these delays are deeply worrying for the affected pharmacy teams.

“While these appointments are urgently required it is equally essential that pharmacists and their staff are given adequate notice. In order to plan for staff absences and ensure pharmacies can remain open and provide care to their patients, they need to be informed of appointment times several days in advance.”