

Hon. Carolina Darias
Minister of Health
Ministry of Health of Spain

Madrid, 10 March 2021

Hon. Minister Darias,

On behalf of the European Patients' Forum (EPF), we wish to congratulate you on your recent appointment as the Minister of Health, and wish you great success in your new role.

On the 26 February, the Spanish Ministry of Health presented its priority groups for vaccination against COVID-19. In addition to the elderly, the priority groups scheduled for early vaccination in your plan include healthcare workers, residents and workers in nursing homes, and people with different pathologies. Patients with chronic conditions, despite their high vulnerability, were not considered as a priority group in these early stages.

As an EPF member, Plataforma de Organizaciones de Pacientes shares our concern regarding the exclusion of individuals with chronic conditions as a priority group, since as scientific evidence has shown, the existence of previous pathologies means that the chronically ill may have a higher risk of complications and mortality due to infection with COVID-19. Furthermore, these patients face a higher risk of exposure as they have to undergo hospital treatments and frequent consultations at their health centres due to their condition. Thus, they represent a highly vulnerable group that should be prioritised and protected in the early stages of the Spanish vaccination campaign.

In addition to the high-risk groups determined by their previous pathologies, the informal caregivers of these patients should also be given priority due to their close contact and the potential for contagion (especially in the case of caregivers of paediatric chronic patients as these patients might not be able to get vaccinated and their caregivers could infect them).

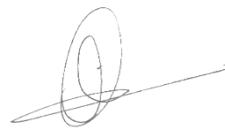
As staunch champions for patients' rights and access to care, we will continue to advocate as required to ensure that patients with chronic conditions are prioritised within COVID-19 vaccination plans.

We look forward to your response on this crucial and timely matter and are available for further dialogue.

Warmest regards,



Marco Greco
President
European Patients' Forum (EPF)



Carina Escobar
President
Plataforma de Organizaciones de Pacientes