

## EPF STATEMENT

# Why the vaccination of healthcare professionals is important to patients

The European Patients' Forum expresses serious concern about the low uptake of COVID-19 vaccination among healthcare professionals and calls on EU Member States to help to ensure that all healthcare professionals who may come into contact with patients are fully vaccinated.

Vaccination of healthcare professionals is first and foremost a question of patients' right to safe care. Many patients with chronic conditions are at high risk of serious complications from vaccine-preventable diseases, including COVID-19. Some patients, for example persons undergoing cancer treatment and those with autoimmune conditions and organ transplants, are very vulnerable to infections in general. Moreover, some patients cannot be vaccinated at all for medical reasons. This is why we believe healthcare professionals should be fully vaccinated.<sup>1</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic has further increased the vulnerability of patients. Many suffered from delays in diagnosis or discontinuation of treatment, while becoming increasingly worried about their safety: over 30% of respondents to EPF's survey on the impact of the pandemic on patients said they felt less safe when visiting healthcare facilities, and 72% said being safe from infection is their top priority.

As pandemic restriction measures are now being gradually lifted across Europe, patients continue to worry about their safety, as new highly transmissible variants of the virus have emerged and most new infections are happening among the unvaccinated.<sup>2</sup> Achieving full vaccination coverage for the population, but particularly for healthcare professionals, will be key to protecting vulnerable groups in society.

Patients have a fundamental right to be safe in a healthcare environment, whether in a hospital, primary care clinic, care home or other facility. Healthcare professionals have an obligation towards the patients they treat not to expose them to risk of infection. EPF applauds the invaluable work healthcare professionals continue to do under very difficult circumstances: we appreciate that most healthcare professionals respect their professional obligations to keep their patients safe, and we remain committed to continuing our ongoing collaboration with organisations representing healthcare professionals to advocate for the importance of vaccination as a vital public health strategy.

<sup>1</sup> For EPF's previous work on vaccination, please see Manifesto on the importance of vaccination for patients (2019), available at [https://www.eu-patient.eu/globalassets/policy/vaccination/resources/11feb\\_manifesto-on-the-importance-of-vaccination.pdf](https://www.eu-patient.eu/globalassets/policy/vaccination/resources/11feb_manifesto-on-the-importance-of-vaccination.pdf); Background report "Vaccination and patients with chronic conditions" (2018), available at <https://www.eu-patient.eu/globalassets/policy/vaccination/resources/background-report---vaccination-and-patients-with-chronic-conditions.pdf>; and "Let's talk about vaccination", a patient's guide, available at [https://www.eu-patient.eu/globalassets/library/publications/lets-talk-about-vaccination\\_final2021-double.pdf](https://www.eu-patient.eu/globalassets/library/publications/lets-talk-about-vaccination_final2021-double.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> EPF (2020) Report on the survey on the impact of COVID-19 on patients and patient organisations, available at [https://www.eu-patient.eu/globalassets/covid19-survey-report\\_final.pdf](https://www.eu-patient.eu/globalassets/covid19-survey-report_final.pdf)