



The Covid-19 pandemic has starkly exposed health inequalities. We have sadly witnessed and experienced the consequences as clinicians in London, with its extremes of wealth and poverty and its unique diversity. The winter is likely to widen our city's chilling injustices in health outcomes, with the prospect of both Covid-19 and flu circulating at once.

Therefore it is essential to increase the flu vaccination levels for those who are living in the most deprived areas; those from the black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and the traditionally overlooked patients (those who are homeless, rough sleepers for example). To do our bit for the cause of equity in general practice we must consider and plan what could and should be done with our seasonal flu programme to ensure these communities are offered the proven health benefits of the flu vaccine. For these patients are manifestly more at risk if they get Covid-19 and flu.

To reach these communities you could consider involving your patients, tapping into skills, knowledge, and community connections amongst them. Consider asking your patient participation group (PPG) for help if you have one - or think about establishing a patient group specifically to target relevant groups in your community for flu vaccination. Establishing a role for your PPG or patient group could be done by meeting safely in real life and/or virtually (which can make this easier in some cases).

Your PPG or patient group could undertake the following (as appropriate to your practice circumstances) to further the equality agenda by promoting flu immunisation to those who most need it:

- Liaising with the voluntary sector/relevant local charities for help and messaging.
- Liaising with local faith groups.
- Creating or contributing to a practice newsletter or social media channel.
- Liaising with local Healthwatch.
- Offering opinions as community representatives or leaders.
- Delivering focused messages to local groups.
- Accessing relevant literature in relevant languages.
- Gathering intelligence from specific patient groups.
- Giving feedback.

Suggested invitation message for existing PPG groups or a “task and finish” patient group:

“It is the end of summer and general practice normally gears up for the flu season vaccination programme at this time of year; these preparations bring winter sharply into focus. This year winter is viewed with even more trepidation than normal with the prospect of seasonal flu circulating alongside Covid-19 in the communities we serve, alongside the challenges of delivering the programme safely. So, this year your practice is facing an unprecedented need to immunise as many people as possible with the eligible cohort nearly double the number of people compared to last year.”



But this year's programme has another challenge besides the numbers and social distancing. Covid-19 has laid bare health inequalities in the communities we serve and your practice is keen not to allow this inequality to be replicated in our immunisation efforts - so the well-recognised protective benefits of the flu vaccination are offered to all who need it. Those who are most vulnerable to Covid-19 are also most vulnerable to flu.

We are reaching out to our PPG/ patient representatives/ interested patients to help us deliver the message about flu vaccination to our patients who are in the most deprived areas, our patients who are from our black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and our traditionally seldom heard patients.

We would like to work with you to try to bridge the inequalities gap for flu immunisation. We need help with how we can best build better communications with these communities and how we might provide equality of access. We would like help with messaging and engagement, and we need to reassure all patients that they will be safe having the flu jab.

We hope you will rise to this challenge and propose>>>>>>>>>>>>inset details of virtual meeting etc etc>>>>>>>>>>>>"

Note: a similar message could be adapted for use with local Healthwatch or a community group or charity.