

Researchers investigate flu jab uptake to learn lessons for COVID-19 vaccine

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Researchers at the University of East Anglia (UEA) are investigating uptake of the flu vaccine among care home staff in a bid to see if lessons can be learned to encourage people to have a COVID-19 immunisation.

This winter could see flu season coincide with a second wave of COVID-19, so ensuring high flu vaccine uptake will be critical to reduce pressure on the NHS and other services.

The global pandemic has highlighted how vulnerable care homes are to infection. Despite this, there is very little data on flu vaccination rates for care home and other social care setting staff.

A survey previously conducted by Public Health England found it was at best 20 percent, and there has been little evidence of improvement.

To address this Dr. Amrish Patel and colleagues have launched a new online survey to find out the scale of the problem, why staff do not get vaccinated and what can be done to increase immunisation levels—information which could also inform efforts for a COVID-19 vaccine programme.

It comes as the government announces that more people in England will be offered a free flu vaccine this year. However, eligibility in the social care sector is complicated. Care home staff who are directly employed by a home are eligible for a free vaccine, and this is funded by employers. Those not directly employed, for example agency staff, may or may not be eligible depending on regional public health and care home policies.

Dr. Patel is an associate professor in UEA's School of Economics, whose research focuses on behavioural health economics. He said: "Any lessons we learn on how to encourage flu vaccination are directly relevant for how to encourage COVID-19 [vaccine](#) uptake.

"COVID-19 has really shown how bad things are for care homes and similar settings. Getting people vaccinated is not easy and some people don't like the idea of vaccines.

"Responses to this survey will inform interventions we could put in place to encourage more take up and help manage a second wave of COVID-19 and flu this winter, because immunising care home staff helps protect both themselves and those they look after."

Dr. Patel said they are particularly keen to hear from frontline social care staff working with older people in care homes and nursing homes, as well as those on different contracts.

"We know that workers are different and to design effective interventions we need to know how the barriers to vaccination vary by worker type," said Dr. Patel. "The idea is to get as many people to respond as possible so we can have up to date data in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and a potential second wave."

The two-minute survey can be completed [here](#), with a chance to win £50.

Provided by University of East Anglia

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