

Blog 19th March 2021

Lots of interest this week as the covid-19 vaccination program at least gets rolled out for border workers and their families.

Surplus capacity – like at Crowne Plaza in Albert St, in the central city - and leftover vaccines [as they are packaged in bottles of 5 shots] are being offered to health workers on an invitation only basis.

Mine vaccination was at Crowne Plaza MIQ which is a 67 km round trip from our surgery and the follow-up will be Saturday 27th March, at 8am! That's even a longer trip from my home and one that is surely beyond reach of most of our patients so I hope the bureaucrats driving the process are a little more practical about access when the South Auckland rollout starts.

Our GP practice representatives seeking information about when we in General Practice can start vaccinating our patients are running into a brick wall at the Counties Manukau DHB level, with managers refusing to even give our nurses access to the online training modules they are using for the large workforce of new vaccinators they are recruiting.

It would make sense to have our nurses up and ready to go. They are already very well trained and experienced vaccinators, unlike most of those recruited for the new hubs.

General Practice already has all the facilities in place without the need for more training, new rented premises, new vaccination fridges [and these cost way more than the usual domestic ones] with their daily carefully monitored cold chain maintenance, let alone the costs employing the heaps of administrators and security guards I saw standing around at Crowne Plaza! Having some hubs is good. It will let shift workers and people juggling transport get to hubs without needing appointments or needing to make it within narrow clinic times. Hopefully they will be open evenings and weekends too, which we can't do.

But General Practice should be involved now and start as soon as possible, and be able to order as many vaccines as they can manage to use without wastage. The bureaucrats have not even considered our home bound patients: even if I have to arrange 5 patients at the home of one of my patients whom I visit because of mobility or dementia issues, I am sure we can arrange another 4 whanau to be there for their vaccines too.

Only General practice can outreach like this, and we cannot miss these vulnerable patients. A team of five million means everyone!

The bureaucrats who seem to be the block at the DHB level do not seem to realise all practices have some spare capacity with experienced nurses, they can call in for extra cover on an as needed basis. We need to know now so we can get on with planning this next step in protecting our patients.

It probably needs better leadership from higher up to break the obvious log jam at the DHB, otherwise this rollout through South Auckland will take six months or more with the obvious consequences of probably having another lockdown due to a covid-19 excursion into the community.

This would be economic disaster for businesses and the self-employed who have

already used up their financial cushions. I know many have used up their financial reserves, as I have heard the stress level increase markedly within our business owners. This time around even though the lockdown was very successful and short lived. Bureaucrats have to take this into account too, in their planning and get the vaccine rollout for 16 year olds and above out there as fast as possible. Delays will add more harm, than a too slow and cautious approach. We are not out of the woods yet, unfortunately.

Be well and be safe. Jacqueline and the team at Tiakina Te Ora,