Influenza vaccination in a COVID-19 environment

The Immunisation Coalition has been organising free public influenza vaccination clinics for the past 8 years. While starting off in humble beginnings (a university library with 32 people vaccinated), it grew in 2019 to a clinic at the Melbourne Town Hall where 1200 people were vaccinated over an 8 hour period.

In 2020 plans had to be altered due to the arrival of COVID-19. Certain conditions and protocols had to be adopted to ensure complete safety during the vaccination clinics. Immunisation providers had to adapt their procedures and practice to comply with measures in place, including physical distancing, to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. This ensured immunisation services were able to be conducted safely without exposing healthcare workers, patients or others to risk of exposure.

They included:

- Use of PPEs
  - For staff
  - For patients
- Well ventilated space
  - Specialised interior space (eg negative flow)
  - Outside
- Minimize contact
  - In a car/vehicle
  - Chairs spaced apart (1.5m)
- Safe distance apart
  - When lining up for vaccination
  - Giving vaccination
  - Waiting after vaccine or for information/forms
- Safely giving information to patient and recording vaccine
- Safe space to observe after vaccination
- Follow up and recording to be done away from vaccination site
- Ability for appropriate response if reaction to vaccination

Where adequate social distancing was not possible, the standard recommended observation period could be reduced to a minimum of 5 minutes (refer ATAGI recommendations). Strict criteria had to be met though, including:

- no history of severe allergic reactions or immediate post-vaccination reactions, such as syncope
- assessment at around 5 minutes after vaccination shows no evidence of any immediate adverse reactions
- Ongoing supervision (for first 15 minutes) by a parent or another responsible adult
A check list for running vaccination clinics in existing GP practises was also developed (attached).

**Examples of influenza vaccination clinics:**

**Melbourne, Victoria**

450 patients vaccinated over 6 hour period at the Melbourne Town Hall. All attendees pre-booked on-line, including consent. Queuing outside of building with 1.5m spacing (lines on the pavement to show spacing). A volunteer would allow 1 person in at a time, or more if part of the same household. Temperature check and symptom check, and a number given prior to entering an anteroom. Once seated in the anteroom, each individual checked against their booking. Once checked they would progress into vaccination area, where seating arranged with minimum 1.5 meter spacing. Vaccination nurse would call patient by number where they are vaccinated behind a screen, and then moved to a separate seating area for the 15 minute post vaccination wait. Each person vaccinated is given a sticker with the time that they are free to leave.

*Maintaining physical distancing prior to entering vaccination room*

*Waiting room post registration*
Launceston, Tasmania
These are pictures taken in the afternoon when there were less patients but you can see how we laid out the chairs with 2 groups - group 1 came in after temp check and receptionist check in, then gave their pre-filled form to one doctor who went through it signed. Then a vaccinator administered the appropriate vaccine and applied the company vaccine sticker. The patient stayed on the chair and after 15mins dismissed. The second group were shown into the other half of the hall and the exercise repeated. It worked well. The patients appreciated it and for some of our older patients it was the first time they had been out for weeks. The admin staff are now making sure everything is in the patient files.
Adelaide, South Australia
Use of an undercover car park.
Chairs are wiped down after each patient vaccinated. ATAGI recommendation to wait 5 minutes rather than the standard 15 in order to speed up process. Minimum 1.5m distance between chairs.