

## Using blood services platforms to facilitate COVID-19 vaccination programs

Implementing an effective coronavirus disease-19 (COVID-19) vaccination program presented several challenges, including approaches to convince people to get vaccinated, setup of convenient vaccination locations, building and operating the logistics involved in the cold-chain needed standards and the optimal use of thawed vaccines to prevent wastage.

Most vaccination plans prioritized first responders and other medical teams, followed by the at-risk elderly people. Currently, a significant number of younger working individuals, initially not eligible for vaccination, show hesitancy to get the vaccine, expressing doubts regarding its safety and efficacy, fear of serious side effects and reluctance to invest time and efforts, even when the vaccine is offered 'for free.' While the trade-off of their health is important, the public has already adjusted to live with the pandemic. An 'out-of-the-box' approach can be useful to overcome such issues.

Blood services worldwide use existing platforms for blood drives operation in easily accessible locations, including working places, educational institutions and social or religious gathering places (churches, synagogues or mosques). The blood services' personnel involved in blood drives organization is familiar with the leading figures in the communities, who are known to positively influence the public to donate blood and can be easily recruited to support the vaccination programs. Chief executive officers hosting a vaccination event 'at the expense of the employer' where employees can get vaccinated at work may be viewed as a tribute to the employees, both by them, by the workers' union organizations and by the general population, as participating in an important life-saving project.

Additional numerous factors that affect the success of a blood drive, such as accessibility, location and time, approval of family members, friends, managers and colleagues, may be used for the vaccination program.

Organizing 'vaccination drives' in these convenient, familiar locations may provide a possible solution. Moreover, blood drives sites can be easily adapted as suitable vaccination locations, since the setup for both operations is similar, including proper sites for assessment of individuals' eligibility before vaccination, the actual procedure and the post-vaccination rest period needed.

Since March 2020, Magen David Adom (MDA) is Israel's National Blood Bank and Blood Services organization in addition to being the national Red Cross organization and Emergency Medical Services organization. MDA participated in the national effort to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic in the 9.33 million population, through more than 4.5 million swabs collection for polymerase chain reaction testing and by providing over 1 million vaccines, carefully matching expected number of individuals and vaccines needed, to prevent wastage of precious resources. This includes successful vaccination events in workplaces, cooperating with the Manufacturers Association and Unions. A small survey showed that employees desired to be vaccinated at work (scale 6.2/7). MDA Blood Services' experience in operating mobile blood drives was utilized to conduct an efficacious program nationwide.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interests relevant to this letter for all authors.

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