




LETTER TO EDITOR

Response to Letter to the Editor by Ish *et al.* entitled ‘COVID-19 vaccine equity—the need of the hour’

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Ish *et al.* rightly draw attention to inequity in access to COVID-19 vaccinations around the world.

In January 2022, less than 10% of people living in countries classified as low income have received at least one dose of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccination compared to >70% in high- and upper-middle-income countries.¹ There is clearly a tension between directing vaccine doses towards primary course programs in lower-income countries and booster or extended primary course programs in higher-income countries.

The position of the World Health Organisation is that in the acute stage of the pandemic the ‘first priority of a vaccination program is to reduce mortality and severe disease and to protect health systems’, with ‘protection against mild disease and reduction of transmission’ a secondary priority.² While the targeted use of booster or extended primary course doses fulfils the first priority, blanket use of these in low-risk individuals may not. The ongoing Omicron wave continues to inform vaccination strategy with preliminary evidence of reduced severity of illness in a population with high rates of vaccination and also prior exposure.

Global distribution based on the greatest need should remain the highest priority for national health programs and

international facilities including COVAX.³ We thank the authors for drawing attention to this important issue.

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Conflict of interest. None declared.

References

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