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## Letter

# COVID-19 Vaccine Prioritisation for Medical Students: The Forgotten Cohort?



*Madam* — Recruitment and retention of consultants to the clinical oncology workforce continue to be challenging [1]. Assigning medical students to oncology placements is a great way to promote the oncology workforce and recruit future trainees. Medical students as a cohort remain ambiguous in the COVID-19 vaccination prioritisation, as they do not fall in the frontline workforce but are required to attend clinical placements to gain experience and continue with medical education [2].

Medical student placements within oncology and cancer centres pose a unique challenge. Cancer patients on systemic anticancer treatments are at risk of immunosuppression and preliminary reports suggest the possibility of prolonged shedding of viable COVID-19 virus for a longer period of time if infected [3]. A study among Oxford healthcare workers showed that staff members who developed positive antibodies postinfection had protection for at least 6 months. However, the study also showed that healthcare workers may be infected by COVID-19 while remaining asymptomatic [4].

Medical students frequently rotate between hospital sites and general practice in their clinical placement years and can potentially be a hidden reservoir for COVID-19. Their placements in oncology units may put cancer patients and healthcare workers at risk by unintentionally spreading COVID-19 asymptotically if not tested or vaccinated and could be a potential loophole to herd immunity within the oncology workforce and patients. Therefore, strong considerations are needed for COVID-19 vaccination of medical students on clinical placements to reduce transmission and infection of COVID-19 as part of the national vaccination strategy [5]. The cohort of future doctors and the next generation custodians of the National Health Service workforce should be protected to allow them to learn and gain clinical exposure safely.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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