

Will COVID vaccines work for CLL patients?

Message sent to all CLL Canada members December 5, 2020

The recent news of successful vaccine trials have many of us wondering whether they will be safe and whether they will work for us, CLL patients who, as you know, have weakened immune systems. CLL Canada board members have consulted various reliable sources of information and come to the following conclusions. As always, this is not medical advice and you should consult your doctor before deciding to take or not to take the COVID vaccine.

1. We don't know much about the safety and efficacy of these vaccines in CLL patients.

There are no clinical data on the safety and efficacy for CLL patients of 3 the vaccines currently in the news. The clinical trials for these vaccines excluded people with compromised immune systems, such as CLL patients.

2. There is nothing that tells us that CLL patients should avoid COVID vaccines.

In theory, there are no reasons why CLL patients should avoid the three vaccines announced to date. One of them, by Oxford and AstraZeneca, is a live vaccine, a type of vaccine which is normally not recommended for CLL patients. However, it appears that this particular vaccine has been genetically modified not to replicate in humans.

3. Social distancing and other preventative measures will continue to be required for some time.

In the absence of data demonstrating the effectiveness of these vaccines in CLL patients, it appears that we will have to continue taking measures to prevent infection –wearing masks in public, social distancing, washing our hands, etc. – at least until the number of COVID infections is substantially reduced.

Should you wish to get additional information on COVID vaccines, here are some reliable sources to consult:

- The CLL Society in the USA has issued a [statement available here](#)
- Blood Cancer UK has published an overview of the COVID vaccines and what they could mean for people with blood cancer [available here](#)
- The Immune Deficiency Foundation (USA) Physicians Advisory Committee has produced an informative [12 minute video available here](#)
- The American Society of Hematology has put a [question and answer page available here](#)
- Finally, distribution of the vaccines will be very complicated, as you can read in [this article on the CBC website](#)