

Off-Site COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic

Medisec has received many queries regarding the suitability of practice car parks, halls or other off-site venues for holding vaccination clinics, bearing in mind both the need to socially distance patients, and to accommodate patients who may have reduced mobility, as well as being aware of the importance of efficient vaccination delivery in all age cohorts.

Medisec would like to raise awareness for members regarding the expected standards to be met in providing vaccinations in approved offsite venues, some of which may change from time to time.

Some locations may not be suitable for this clinical service, and we have provided some issues to consider when making plans for the delivery of a safe and effective vaccination clinic.

In order to adhere to these standards and to avail of the State Indemnity, which is limited to exclude acts of negligence from the doctor, we have set out below some issues to consider when planning your vaccine delivery. These are not exhaustive, and HSE Clinical guidance must be adhered to at all times.

Planning: Detailed advance planning, clear allocation of responsibilities and full involvement of all team members is advised. Extra staff/volunteers may be necessary.

Public Liability Insurance (PLI): Remember to contact the providers of your PLI well in advance and confirm that they will extend your cover to using the offsite venue, even if it is your own car park – you are changing its use.

Hygiene: Is there a clinically clean area for hand sanitisation, vaccine dilution/preparation, safe sharps and clinical waste disposal? Is there access nearby to clean running water, for further hand hygiene purposes? Ensure there are facilities available for donning and doffing appropriate PPE.

Lighting: Is the lighting sufficient to allow both accurate paperwork and safe clinical practice in preparing the vaccines?

Health and Safety: Consider what might be appropriate work wear for staff, and the suitability of clothing for all weather conditions.

Transport of vaccines: Consider the suitability of transporting vaccines to the venue appropriately and in accordance with the guidelines for each vaccine, bearing in mind their perceived instability with movement for some vaccines.

Refrigeration and storage: Ensure that the vaccines can be stored appropriately and safely, maintaining the Cold Chain according to the guidelines for each vaccine and ensuring secure storage of the vaccines.

Accessibility and Traffic Management : Is the proposed venue suitable and accessible for the expected volumes of traffic, bearing in mind the 15-30 minute observation period. It may be helpful to appoint someone to direct cars. Remember to provide an alternative pathway to vaccination for patients who do not have access to a car.

Consent: Ensure that adequate informed consent can be obtained, and that the patient is given an opportunity to have their queries answered. Is it possible to advise re potential side effects, all in an open space whilst maintaining confidentiality?

Confidentiality and Privacy: Is it possible to discuss patients' health issues in a confidential manner, bearing in mind impaired hearing in the elderly cohort, confounded by mask-wearing? Have you considered how you can maintain privacy where patients may need assistance to unbutton clothing, leaving them exposed to their undergarments?

Emergency Preparedness:

- Ensure there is an appropriate, well-lit recovery area with a couch, and the necessary emergency equipment?
- Can the patient be easily transported to an emergency area in case of both minor and major reactions post-vaccine?
- Can both a simple syncope and an episode of anaphylaxis be safely managed?
- Is there access to mains electricity?
- Have you considered gaining access to a car in the event of the central locking being activated?
- Is it clear who will be responsible for responding if a patient is unwell, and is there a plan regarding extracting the patient from the car if necessary?
- It may be helpful to request the support of your local ambulance and/or fire service for appropriate emergency preparedness advice.
- Have you considered access for emergency vehicles to your facility in the event of an emergency? Some car parks have a low barrier preventing access to high vehicles.

Records: Is there access to patient records and clinical history (considering some patients are on certain medications which need particular advice, e.g. methotrexate etc, and also to check allergy records), or has all information been safely managed in advance of the patient arriving?

Observation Area: Is the post-vaccination observation area well lit, close to emergency supplies, and well supervised in order to identify any patient who might be in difficulty. Is there a couch available nearby for any patient who may feel unwell post vaccine?

Weather: Are there arrangements made to accommodate wind rain and snow? In the event of vaccinating through the summer, is there shade available on a hot day?

Underground Car Park: Is there adequate lighting, and is there good mobile phone coverage in case of a need to make urgent calls?

Having considered all of the above, are you satisfied that this venue is safe and appropriate for holding a COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic for your patients and have the HSE approved the Operational Guidance for the use of such a facility?

Finally, remember to document your risk assessment and its conclusions.

“This article was originally published in our Medzine on 26 February 2021. The contents of this publication are indicative of current developments and contain guidance on general medico legal queries. It does not constitute and should not be relied upon as definitive legal, clinical or other advice and if you have any specific queries, please contact Medisec for advice”.