

## **Clarifications regarding the administration of AstraZeneca vaccine to specific age groups**

On the occasion of the public debate on the effectiveness of the AstraZeneca vaccine, particularly in people aged 55 or over, following the decision of some EU Member States to set an age limitation, the Ministry of Health clarifies the following:

1. The European Medicines Agency (EMA), as the competent authority of the European Union for the authorisation of medicinal products, which are examined and approved by representatives of all 27 EU Member States on the basis of purely scientific criteria and data, approved the circulation of the AstraZeneca vaccine on 29 January. In its recommendation EMA did not set any restrictions or contraindications on the administration of the vaccine to specific age groups.
2. The Scientific Advisory Committee on Coronavirus on 5 February, having before it the opinion of EMA and evaluating the conditions for the authorisation of the vaccine and the available publications based on scientific data, recommended that the Ministry of Health adopts as such the recommendation of EMA with the primary aim of protecting, through vaccination coverage, individuals who have an increased risk of serious illness and, by extension, hospitalization and/or death, which concerns not only elderly patients but other groups of patients as well. Within this framework, the vaccination of specific groups such as patients undergoing haemodialysis, or patients who have undergone transplants or thalassaemics, will be in progress in the following weeks along with the vaccination of the population based on age.

Furthermore, given that the AstraZeneca vaccine has been included in the National Vaccination Plan for COVID-19, and since this vaccine is of a different technology from the other two vaccines already administered, the Ministry of Health agrees with the reasonable request of the Cyprus Federation of Patients' Associations (CyFPA) that citizens are informed in advance which vaccine will be administered to them. To this end, the Ministry of Health, in cooperation with the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Strategy, is working on ways to ensure that through the Vaccination Portal citizens will know, when arranging the appointment, which vaccine will be administered to them. More details will be announced when the procedure is finalised.

The Ministry of Health and the Scientific Advisory Committee are closely monitoring any developments that may occur at European and international level, in order to assess the data that may arise.