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From: [redacted]

Sent: Mon 11/9/2020 7:53:31 PM

Subject: OFFICIAL SENSITIVE - Update from the JCVI secretariat

Received: Mon 11/9/2020 7:53:40 PM

Dear JCVI members and COVID-19 sub-committee members.

I wanted to flag a couple of key issues.

1. You will likely have seen that Pfizer have today published a press release regarding an interim look at their Phase 3 data, available [here](#). We will discuss this development on Thursday, but this means the Main Committee may have to meet at relatively short notice once all relevant data have been submitted to the secretariat. We are working with the company to ensure confidentiality around this process, and to better understand timelines. Our current thinking is this may be between mid-November and early December, however this is a fluid situation which we are keeping under review.

2. You may also have noticed an article in the Telegraph over the weekend on JCVI. I copy the details of the article below as it is behind a paywall. I would like to ask all members to direct all press queries to [redacted]@phe.gov.uk and I. Press queries will intensify over the next days and weeks, and we would like to ensure that JCVI speaks with one voice. We will discuss handling with you if you wish to engage, or otherwise PHE comms will handle the request working with the secretariat and the Chair. Given the substance of the article, I ask that anyone with any concerns email [redacted] and I, and we will listen and respond as best we can. In a pandemic situation the Government will rightly want to respond as quickly as possible to save lives and relieve pressure on the health service. This doesn't mean that JCVI will have to make decisions that the data do not support.

If you have any questions or queries please don't hesitate to email or call me. I will do my best to respond as quickly as possible.

Kind regards

[redacted]

Government 'piling pressure on scientists to endorse Covid vaccine before Christmas'

Source says Boris Johnson wants to be able to make announcement on jab as 'as Christmas present to the nation'
By [Katherine Rushton](#) 7 November 2020 • 6:00pm

<image001.png>

Boris Johnson is hopeful that he will be able to announce a vaccine programme quickly CREDIT: Simon Dawson/Reuters

The Government is piling "worrying" political pressure on scientists on the Joint Committee on Vaccination (JCVI) and Immunisation to endorse [a Covid vaccine](#) before Christmas, The Telegraph has learned.

Political figures have made it clear to individuals on the committee that Boris Johnson would like them to recommend a vaccine programme quickly so that he can offer it as "a Christmas present to the nation".

A source said: "It's done with nods and winks, as these things are – but they are in no doubt. The Prime Minister wants to be able to make an announcement just before [Christmas](#) – here is my present to the nation of the vaccine – even if the vaccinations aren't going to happen until the New Year."

However, scientists on the JCVI are concerned that trying to meet that deadline could compromise the safety of the vaccination programme and are determined that the process is not rushed.

The source said: "There is genuine political pressure, which is worrying. The risks would be that you approve something without being absolutely convinced of its safety and its efficacy, which is why the scientists and regulators are absolutely committed to doing this in their own time."

Even with scientists resisting political pressure, sources close to the process believe that the Government will be in a position to announce a vaccine [soon after the New Year](#).

However, the Government appears to be making plans for much earlier delivery. This week it emerged that GPs have been told to draw up plans to start administering the vaccine to over-85s and frontline workers from the beginning of December, according to the GP magazine Pulse.

Any vaccine [proposed for use in the UK](#) must be approved by regulators to say it is safe and sufficiently effective to roll out.

Usually, the JCVI then advises the Government whether it is of sufficient value for money to be purchased and delivered by the NHS. However, the Government has already purchased large quantities of Covid vaccines in development, meaning that, in this instance, the JCVI only has to endorse their roll-out through NHS services.

The committee is currently working up proposals for who should get the vaccine first, and how it should be delivered to them. It will not finalise its advice until it has factored in evidence of how effective the vaccines are for each age group and any risks they pose.

The JCVI is highly unlikely to reject the Covid vaccines outright, provided they are approved by regulators, but could "push back" if they are not sufficiently effective or restrict their use if they are less effective in certain age groups, a source said.

For example, if a vaccine was less effective in the over-80s, the committee could advise ministers not to give it to the over-80s but protect that age group by administering the vaccine to those who live and work with them.

A Department of Health and Social Care source said: "The JCVI advises ministers, but it's a ministerial decision who to prioritise."

Professor [5.1.2e](#) [5.1.2e](#) [5.1.2e](#), who chairs the JCVI's Covid group, said in a statement issued by Public Health England that its members are independent and would only give their advice after "considering all available evidence", but that they recognised the importance of doing so "in a timely manner".

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesman said: "The independent JCVI is advising the Government on which groups of people to prioritise for potential Covid-19 vaccines. It does not endorse or approve vaccines."

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