

Sector calls for certain medical technology employees to be part of prioritised groups in the COVID-19 vaccination roll-out

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MedTech Europe is the trade association representing the world's leading manufacturers and distributors of medical technology, including medical devices, diagnostics, and digital health solutions. MedTech Europe also represents a network of over 50 national trade associations throughout Europe. MedTech Europe recommends certain groups of medical technology industry employees to be considered as essential workers in the ongoing roll-out of the vaccination distribution strategies across Europe.

The medical technology sector and its employees have demonstrated its crucial part in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and in supporting the continuity of essential healthcare services throughout the crisis. During 2020, our employees have been indispensable in the rapid development, production, and distribution of COVID-19 essential medical technologies such as COVID-19 diagnostic testing kits, personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks, gloves and operational gowns, and ICU equipment such as ventilators. The medical technology industry employees also maintained their engagement and responsibility to ensure that vital prevention, diagnosis, care and treatment solutions remain available for people suffering from other conditions, such as chronic diseases or acute health episodes.

As we move closer to the approval of the COVID-19 vaccines in Europe, our industry supports the efforts by the European Commission, ECDC and the Member States in deploying vaccination guidelines and defining priority groups, such as elderly people, health and social care workers, people with existing health conditions and those considered as essential workers. These efforts will support a transparent and controlled deployment of COVID-19 vaccines in the order of highest needs.

As these distribution plans and guidance on the vaccination roll-out are being developed, our industry requests clarity on the composition of the group classified as "essential workers" and to consider the eligibility of certain medical technology employees to be included in this group.

Our industry has been working non-stop to develop, produce, distribute, install, and maintain needed medical technologies during the pandemic. MedTech Europe believes that the inclusion of certain employees of our sector under the priority group of 'essential workers' for receiving the COVID-19 vaccines is critical. This is essential for ensuring the continued safe delivery of any lifesaving and life-improving health solutions to patients and for the proper functioning of medical equipment necessary in healthcare facilities, such as hospitals, clinics, testing labs, care facilities and other settings.

MedTech Europe proposes that the following groups of medical technology employees be considered as “essential workers” in any prioritisation guidelines:

1. Medical technology representatives supporting healthcare facilities on site

Medical technology experts support healthcare professionals as well as healthcare infrastructures in delivering patient care and ensuring the safe and effective use, installation, servicing, and maintenance of medical equipment, medical devices and diagnostic platforms. This is particularly crucial for medical procedures and healthcare structures which use complex medical technologies.

The presence of these representatives in healthcare organisations is critical in contributing to the safe, effective, and continuous use of the technologies. These individuals are employees of medical technologies manufacturers and not of healthcare organisations. This may complicate the vaccine administrator’s ability to identify and flag these representatives for prioritised vaccine allocation and may exclude them from meeting the requirements to be included in the early stages of vaccination distribution. Vaccinating these representatives early in the process would help eliminate the risks that these representatives may be potential vectors of the COVID-19 virus. It would also facilitate the alignment with internal access rules that healthcare organizations may establish vis-à-vis the vaccination requirements.

2. Medical technology sector employees in direct manufacturing and distribution roles

Certain medical technology industry employees are involved in the manufacturing and distribution of critical medical devices and diagnostics. They are integral in ensuring the continued supply of medical technologies, which are heavily needed in sustaining the fight against the pandemic and the continuity of care for all patients.

Our industry has been working around the clock to produce needed technologies and solutions and have invested energy to ensure that manufacturers can comply with the rise in demand for certain technologies whilst operating under strict pandemic containment measures. Giving these workers priority in the vaccination scheme will help to minimise the risks of disruption in the production and distribution processes in medical technology manufacturing.

MedTech Europe believes in the utmost importance of having these groups of employees included in the category of essential workers for the prioritisation of COVID-19 vaccine distribution. This would help to ensure a full operational capacity of the industry to deliver needed technologies to patients and healthcare systems.

MedTech Europe would welcome efforts of the European Commission and Member States to consider the outlined request when developing European and national guidelines on the prioritisation of groups for COVID-19 vaccination.

About MedTech Europe

MedTech Europe is the European trade association representing the world's leading manufacturers and distributors of medical technology including medical devices, diagnostics and digital health who research, develop, manufacture, distribute and supply health-related technologies, services, and solutions. MedTech Europe also represents a network of 50 national medical technology associations that represent the medical technology industry on a national level.

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