



Supporting Patients with Learning Disabilities To Have The Covid-19 Vaccine

Overview:

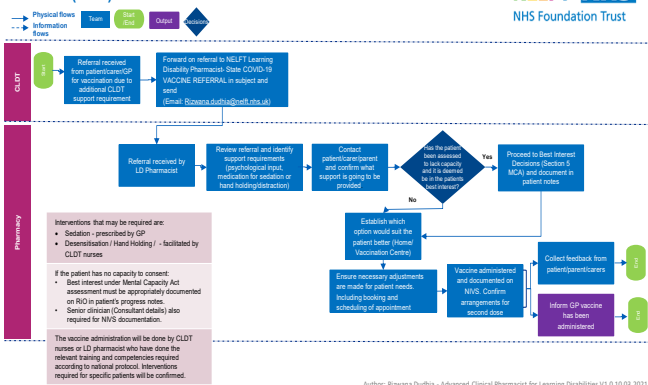
When the Covid-19 Vaccination Programme began calls were received from worried parents or carers asking how they would manage taking patients with learning disabilities (LD) to mass sites as they may experience anxiety resulting in aggression or challenging behaviour due to large crowds, noise, and needle phobia. Many of these patients are vulnerable to severe effects of COVID-19 and therefore vaccination was a priority. The LD pharmacist working with the community learning disability team (CLDT) for North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT) led on this project and facilitated the implementation of an outreach pathway. This formed a partnership working with NELFT, Local Authorities and GPs. NELFT were not directly commissioned, this was the remit of the programme by primary care networks, however work was done a single team to make reasonable adjustments and meet the needs of patients. The pathway allowed for those patients requiring extra support such as desensitisation, hand holding and distraction to be referred to the LD Pharmacist and the team. Parents/carers of these patients were contacted, and home visits would be arranged.

Objectives & Method:

The main objective was to increase the vaccination uptake within the LD population.

Various ideas were thought of to begin with such as adapting clinic sites to meet the needs of LD patients such as no long queues, big open spaces, minimal staff and the use of distraction techniques on site. Although this did work for some patients it was still difficult for other LD patients to physically leave the house and car and enter a building without becoming anxious or aggressive. Due to this it was thought that home visits would be the most effective plan and it would give the patient the chance to be in their own environment and be more relaxed.

Outreach Pathway: Covid-19 Vaccination for Learning Disability Patients (BHR)



Results:

In total through the referral pathway within the 4 boroughs of NELFT 115 LD patients were vaccinated with their first and second dose of the Covid-19 Astra Zeneca Vaccine. This figure helped to increase the overall uptake of total LD vaccination figures within the whole of North East London to regions of 80-90%.

Feedback was requested from carers once the vaccine had been administered successfully. This was received from 18 parents/carers and each testimonial was extremely positive and demonstrated how rewarding this project has been.

Conclusion:

The project has allowed for the Covid-19 vaccine administration to be done safely in those LD patients who cannot routinely get vaccines or immunisations due to various reasons such as anxiety, needle phobia and fear of healthcare services.

There was a focus on patient centred care where the need for individuals was identified and visits were adapted to meet this and provide the best possible support. Feedback received has been positively overwhelming. Administering the vaccine successfully into patients who would normally refuse, become aggressive or anxious has shown that by providing simple adjustments we can get sufficient care to them and we can improve their treatment plans where previously this has been thought to be impossible.

Next Steps / Future Developments:

I feel the project is sustainable and can be replicated to deliver other routine healthcare services too such as annual health checks, physical health checks, blood pressure, blood tests and other vaccines or immunisations which can help a vulnerable population access appropriate care. The project can be used to help support the influenza programme in the coming months which usually has a poor uptake amongst the LD population.

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References:

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