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French Hospital Union Leader Urges Government to Mandate COVID-19 Vaccination for Everyone

A French hospital union leader is arguing that a “health pass” and obligatory COVID-19 vaccination for healthcare workers will not be enough to curb another wave of COVID-19, and urged the government to make vaccination compulsory for everyone.

Frédéric Valletoux, president of the Hospital Federation of France (FHF), which includes more than 1,000 public hospitals and as many medico-social structures (retirement homes and independent specialized shelters), and mayor of Fontainebleau, just outside of Paris, stressed the country “no longer [has] the luxury of taking half-measures” during a Sunday [interview](#) with *le Journal du Dimanche*.



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“Everywhere, the indicators are on the rise: the epidemic context shows us the limits of intermediate measures,” Valletoux argued, while adding that such tools as government-issued “health passes,” the electronic or hardcopy proof of one’s vaccination status, a negative COVID-19 test in the past 48 hours, or the antibody to the virus, “worked in the short term but will not be enough to achieve real collective immunity,” given the “unprecedented speed” of the virus’ spread. “Health passes” are set to become mandatory in France on August 9 to enter public venues such as restaurants, shopping malls, gyms, theaters, nightclubs, and any site gathering more than 50 people, and to board planes and inter-city trains.

The dynamic of the current wave of COVID-19 cases, according to Valletoux, pushes the government to have to “assume this course of obligation with voluntarism,” in particular because “every day that passes sees the anti-vaxxers harden their words.” Valletoux was possibly referring to the massive anti-government protest that rolled across France, gathering as many as [161,000](#) participants in Paris alone, that followed the [introduction](#) of a “health pass” requirement for non-essential places by French President Emmanuel Macron on July 12. On July 26, the French parliament [approved](#) the measure, as well as compulsory COVID-19 vaccination of the healthcare workers. The “health passes” were initially set to apply only to adults, but French lawmakers decided adolescents aged 12 and older will need one as well, starting September 30. The protesters only got a few small concessions to the draconian rules, such as lower fines for violating the ID mandate and a postponement of when the policy would come into force at shopping malls.

But even that seems insufficient to the hospital union boss.

“It is time to go beyond the incentive to take the last step,” he asserts. “The question was taboo a few



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months ago, because we were at the stage of believing that educating and convincing people [to get a vaccine] would be enough. Everyone wanted to believe that.” Despite the active “education” campaign rolled out by the French government, only slightly more than [half](#) of the population have rolled up their sleeves to become fully vaccinated. The progress, Valloteux believes, is not good enough.

Switching from the topic of healthcare and herd immunity, Valloteux discussed the social implications of the “half-measure” and said a non-universal “health pass” system would create confusion and a two-tier society. Therefore, it would be more “convenient” to mandate every single person to get a jab. “[Mandatory vaccination] is a simple, clear, and effective measure. The implementation of the pass will be extremely complex, especially in hospitals, to decide which patients will need it upon entry and which will not.” Valloteux is hopeful France would abandon its current “too individualistic approach” and become a “pioneering country” by imposing the measure, which would “set in motion a worldwide movement in favor of compulsory vaccination.”

FHF is not alone in its radical calls. The National Academy of Medicine (NAM) called for a mandatory vaccination of the general population and advised that the “health pass” be replaced with a “vaccination pass.”

“‘Obligation’ is not a foul word when it applies to vaccinating against Covid-19,” [wrote](#) the NAM back in May. Vaccinating essential workers, along with children and adolescents, is the only way to achieve “enough of a collective immunity to control the pandemic,” the group stated. Measures such as wearing masks and lockdowns will be “insufficient” to control the spread of the virus over the long term, says the Academy, and they are “overwhelming, in particular socially.” In order to achieve herd immunity, 90 percent of the adult population, or 80 percent of the entire population, including children, must be vaccinated, per the organization.

An extension of this vaccination obligation to the entire French population has already been mentioned by the French National Authority for Health (HAS), which recommended on July 16 to “reflect” on the subject of the universal COVID-19 mandate. The HAS said in a statement that the debate should focus on widening mandatory vaccination beyond the current government draft law and consider whether to make vaccination mandatory for “all people vulnerable to COVID infection, for professionals who are in contact with the public, and even for the general public,” [according](#) to Reuters.

French President Emmanuel Macron suggested in his July 12 speech that making COVID-19 vaccines mandatory for everyone is an option he may consider introducing. Macron said this decision would depend on whether the COVID-19 situation worsens in France, but did not specify what level of infection would be considered “acceptable.”



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