

# The Virtual Reality of smoking and Covid19: Experience of reorienting services at SVUH during the Global Pandemic 2020-21 in the Republic of Ireland

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# Background

- The Global pandemic has necessitated a major public health response
- COVID-19 was first formally reported in Wuhan, China at the end of 2019
- Its impact on older people and medically complex or vulnerable patients was high
- Healthcare workers were a high risk group across the world
- Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures have evolved over time

Coronavirus  
**COVID-19**



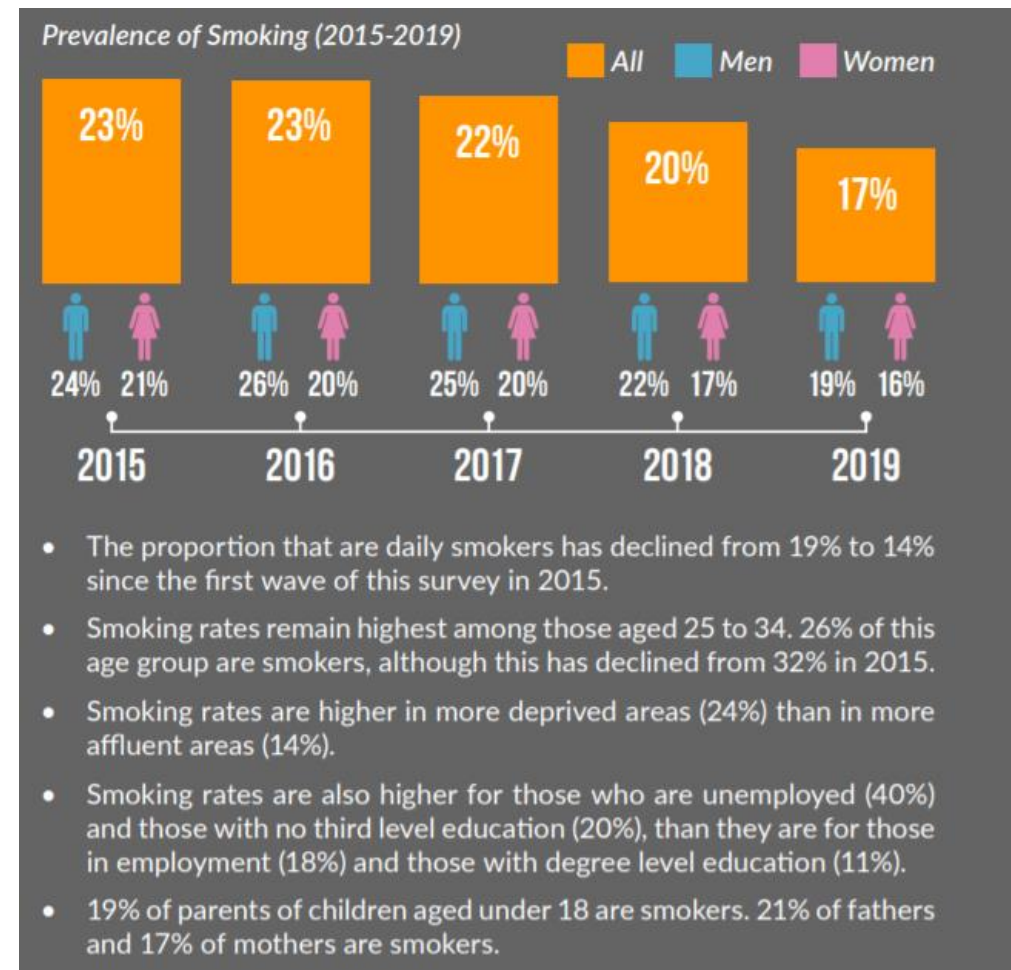
# Background

- In congregated, high-risk settings such as hospitals, essential frontline services were maintained but many patient services were initially deferred or moved online
- To minimise contagion, staff reduced non-essential ward working and out-patient services were curtailed
- There is concern this might create unmet need and health promotion services particularly are important



# Smoking and COVID-19

- Smoking prevalence in Ireland is 17%
- Smoking is a major risk factor for adverse outcomes in severe COVID-19
- Arguably therefore smoking cessation and in-patient management should be sustained, if not prioritised



# Results

- SVUH, an award-winning hospital, has a longstanding Smoking Advice Service and in Ireland to ban smoking outright in 2007
- A comprehensive Smoking Advice Service was reoriented to sustain accessibility for patients and staff
- There are both in-patient and out-patient services, staff supports and a group six-week stop smoking course
- All include follow-up evaluation and pilots were documented
- Accompanying presentation covers the online stop smoking course in more detail



# Results

- In the first wave, services were limited and staff redeployed including to contact tracing services
- However, by the second and third waves services had been re-configured. Staff continued to take ward referrals but followed up patients by telephone rather than in-person
- T-Pro, a secure online video consultation system, was piloted for acceptability
- The group programme was delivered virtually online by facilitators
- Patients participated well in all services. The profile of those in the online group was more likely to be middle-aged and female



# Vaccination


**ST. VINCENT'S  
HEALTHCARE GROUP**


 Department of  
**PREVENTIVE MEDICINE  
& HEALTH PROMOTION**

## Healthwise SVHG

A Health promotion newsletter for St. Vincent's Healthcare Group: Spring 2021

*"Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance you must keep moving. Albert Einstein"*

### Interview with Hazel O'Brien, Lead Peer Vaccinator

I spoke to Hazel recently during one of her busy COVID19 vaccination days. Hazel, CNM in St. Christopher's Ward, has been working as Lead Peer Vaccinator with the team who are working really hard to get us all vaccinated. She has found the experience of delivering the programme challenging but great fun as staff are so happy and keen to get it. The first week in particular was quite emotional; it's been a bright spark in a very difficult period.



### Who is involved in the SVUH Vaccination Team?

Twenty-two vaccinators have been trained up, including some from SVPH. Most are nurses but three interns and several consultants have also given their time. A recovery nurse watches over people for 15 minutes after their vaccinations. However at least 40 people are involved in organising our vaccination programme from many departments.



It's a complicated operation and SVUH is also acting as a hub for sending out vaccines to the community. Every vial has to be accounted for so the team are there till 10pm some nights making sure that every last vaccine is used by phoning wards. Hazel commented that it's been great to see staff supporting each other to let colleagues leave the wards, despite the resulting workload. She also has really appreciated the support from SVPH.

The vaccination team has shown enormous commitment as they are still trying to do their normal busy jobs.

### ALSO IN THIS ISSUE...

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Page 4: Healthy Eating Award at SVUH

However Hazel says they are learning new things every day, including ways of doing things that will be useful for future vaccination programmes. One example of this is the move from a paper-based system to a computer system. Each group within the team is vital and we should probably give a special mention to the administration staff who are dealing with a new system, uncertain supplies and a lot of demand from us all! Do be patient when on the phone and remember to thank them as well as the vaccinators.

I think it is safe to say that the service provided by the COVID-19 vaccination team is one which has generated a lot of joy in SVUH. The work the team has put into the programme is much appreciated by us all.



**Want to know more about the different types of vaccine?**  
**Have a look at these websites:**

<https://www2.hse.ie/covid-19-vaccine/>  
<https://www2.hse.ie/screening-and-vaccinations/covid-19-vaccine/immunity-covid-19-vaccine.html>  
<https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/the-race-for-a-covid-19-vaccine-explained>

**WOULD YOU LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE TO A FUTURE EDITION TO HEALTHWISE?**  
Contributions can be emailed to the department at [p.medicine@st-vincents.ie](mailto:p.medicine@st-vincents.ie)

- The vaccination rollout has been a game changer
- SVUH established its own in-house vaccination programmes from early January and supported high risk community settings such as long stay facilities
- In Ireland the National vaccination programme has now had over 90% uptake in adults
- Breakthrough infections have a small but significant impact, though severe disease and hospitalisation reduced

## Lessons on Virtual Working

- The new normal will likely include more distance delivery which is efficient as well as potentially effective
- All staff meetings were conducted virtually and highly successfully
- The dynamic of 1:1 and group interaction is different online but good outcomes are still achievable



# Impact on Healthcare Education



- SVUH is a major teaching hospital of University College Dublin
- At any one time there are approximately 1000 health sciences students on placement
- During the pandemic final year Medicine graduation was expedited and nursing students were offered frontline remunerated posts
- Master of Public Health student graduates engaged in contact tracing
- In 2021/2 academic year vaccination declaration mandatory for students

# Thank You !



**ST. VINCENT'S  
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Elm Park

**Thank you**  
to every single one of our staff



ST. VINCENT'S  
UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL  
Elizabethtown

**Thank you**  
to every single one of our staff