

## **Equally Well launches Global Call to Action to improve vaccine access for people living with mental health difficulties**

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An international alliance of experts by experience and by profession is today calling for urgent action worldwide to remove barriers to accessing vaccines for preventable disease for people living with mental illness and substance use disorders.

The *Global Call to Action* calls on all nations to prioritise vaccination for people living with mental illness and people with addictions.

The *Global Call to Action* is produced by the International Equally Well Alliance. It is supported by leading organisations in the UK including the Royal College of Psychiatrists, Rethink Mental Illness and Centre for Mental Health.

Worldwide, people living with a mental illness twice as likely to be hospitalised, experience long term effects or die from COVID-19 and at greater risk of contracting and dying from other preventable diseases like influenza, pneumonia and tuberculosis, as a report in the *Lancet Psychiatry\** has found.

Equally Well is a collaboration focused on working together to improve the physical health outcomes of people living with mental illness. The *Global Call to Action* is being led by [Equally Well Australia](#), [Equally Well New Zealand and Equally Well United Kingdom](#) and with support from alliance members in Europe, the United States, Canada and Asia.

Equally Well UK expert by experience group chair Kevin James said: “The success of the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out has showed how targeted and supported vaccine programmes can save lives and prevent serious illness. Too many of us are overlooked in vaccine programmes around the world. In the UK, people with severe mental illness were prioritised for Covid-19 vaccines but we are not all eligible for a flu vaccine. And not all local health systems take proactive steps to reach out to people living with a mental illness when delivering vaccination programmes.”

You can sign up to support the *Global Call to Action* at <https://www.equallywell.org.au/declaration/>.

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\*Vai B, Mazza MG, Delli Colli C, Foiselle M, Allen B, Benedetti F, et al. Mental Disorders and Risk of Covid-19 Related Mortality, Hospitalization and Intensive Care Unit Admission: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Lancet Psychiatry*. 2021;8:797-812