



Contribution to Vaccination Roll-out: NZSTA Position Statement

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Contribution to Vaccination Roll-out

National responsibility and goodwill

The NZSTA and speech-language therapists across New Zealand support the national vaccination roll-out and as New Zealand residents and health professionals offer their support in anyway necessary to keep New Zealand safe and healthy.

Scope of practice

NZSTA members are registered health professionals - speech-language therapists.

Speech-language therapists work across many settings from schools to the Justice System to hospitals. The settings a speech-language therapist works within dictates their scope of practice and familiarity with the health system.

All members hold clean police checks and most will have up-to-date first aid and CPR certification. However this is not obligatory in all workplaces.

It is not within the scope of practice for a speech-language therapist to administer medicine, take blood or administer injections.

Extended scope of practice

It would be reasonable for speech-language therapists to be trained to administer vaccines.

This training would need to be comprehensive and presume no prior knowledge. The education would need to be considered as extended scope of practice and the certification process would need to ensure competency and protection for speech-language therapists undertaking the training and the extended task.

Essential worker status

Speech-language therapists are essential workers. They work with vulnerable populations including those with COVID-19 and influenza. The hospital speech-language therapist caseload is greater in winter months when infectious diseases are higher.

Any re-deployment of speech-language therapists from their daily clinical care has potential to lead to greater health burden in the long-term e.g. reduced early head and neck cancer rehabilitation leads to potential for poor health outcomes and reduced early intervention of speech-language therapy in schools leads to poorer academic outcomes in later life.

This balance of the essential national role of speech-language therapy must be weighed up against the need to vaccinate New Zealanders. There may be speech-language therapists who are not currently working in essential services who are available and willing to take up training.

The NZSTA would be happy to endorse and advertise the vaccination role if necessary.