

Yellow-Fever-related queries to the UK's national pre-travel advice line, 2019-2023: rising clinical complexity, and a growing role for pharmacies.

Trent Herdman¹, Sanch Kanagarajah², Alexandra Stillwell², Hilary Simons², Dipti Patel²

¹ University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, UK, ² National Travel Health Network and Centre, UK

Background: The National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) provides training and clinical advice for health professionals: this requires a dynamic awareness of travellers' and travel health providers' needs.

Methods: We analysed all calls to the NaTHNaC advice line from January 2019 to July 2023, assessing changing characteristics of yellow fever (YF)-related queries. We compared a cohort post-dating 2019 revised national guidance on YF vaccination and COVID-19-related travel restrictions (Jul 2020-Jul 2023) to a pre-guidance cohort (Jan-Oct 2019) using multivariable logistic regression. We modelled changes in the number of general practices and pharmacies registered as Yellow Fever Vaccination Centres (YFVCs) using linear regression.

Results: We received 4,282 YF-related calls, including 1,476 pre-guidance and 1,641 post-guidance/post-COVID-19 restrictions. A rising proportion of calls came from pharmacies (12% pre-guidance, 31% post, OR=3.2, P<0.001).

Over this period, the number of general practice YFVCs fell (1,565 to 705; P=0.005), whereas pharmacy YFVC numbers changed little (1125 to 997; P=0.167), with pharmacies now making up a majority (55%) of YFVCs in England Wales and Northern Ireland.

Among pharmacy calls, the proportion of travellers with complex health needs doubled post-guidance/post-COVID (aOR=2.0, 95%CI=1.4-2.9, P<0.001); among non-pharmacy calls, this proportion rose by 1.3 times (95%CI=1.1-1.5, P=0.005).

Conclusions: Clinical complexity of YF-related queries has risen, particularly for pharmacies. To understand and adapt to this trend, NaTHNaC is increasing engagement with the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, pharmacy chains, and individual pharmacists to provide focussed training and advice.