

Health experts highlight the need to maintain protection against COVID-19 and ensure the availability of different vaccine platforms

The National Association of Health Information Professionals (ANIS), with the support of HIPRA, brought together experts in public health, immunology and vaccinology to analyze the current COVID-19 situation, the evolution of vaccine technologies and the criteria that shape vaccination strategies.

Experts emphasize that, although the impact of COVID-19 has decreased among the general population, SARS-CoV-2 continues to circulate, and older people, immunocompromised individuals and those with certain chronic conditions remain at greater risk of developing severe complications.

Girona, September 21, 2026 – Six years after the start of the pandemic, COVID-19 has lost prominence in public debate, and its overall impact on the general population has declined significantly. However, SARS-CoV-2 continues to circulate, and a new rise in cases is currently being observed, while certain population groups remain at greater risk of hospitalisation, complications and death. Against this scenario, experts highlight the importance of maintaining protection for the most vulnerable people and adapting vaccination strategies to the epidemiological situation and the available evidence.

This was one of the key messages of the event **“The new generation of COVID-19 vaccines: technology platforms, innovation and future challenges”**, organised by the **National Association of Health Information Professionals (ANIS), with the support of HIPRA**, at the HIPRA Campus in Girona. The session, aimed at health journalists and moderated by Margarida Mas Sardà, ANIS’s territorial delegate in Catalonia, addressed the epidemiological situation of COVID-19, the different vaccine platforms and the criteria underpinning current immunisation strategies.

The event was attended by **Dr Sonia Tamames Gómez**, a specialist in Preventive Medicine and Public Health and former Managing Director of Public Health of Castilla y León, **Dr José Gómez Rial**, Head of the Immunology Department at Santiago de Compostela University Hospital and coordinator of the Immunology area of the Vaccine Research Group (GENVIP), and **Dr Fernando Moraga-Llop**, paediatrician, spokesperson and senior board member of the Spanish Association of Vaccinology (AEV).

Lower circulation does not eliminate the risk

“COVID-19 has become less prominent among the general population, but it remains an important disease for the most vulnerable people. The fact that it is discussed less does not mean that the risk has disappeared,” said Dr Tamames. The expert stressed that the virus continues to circulate among the population and that current

surveillance should assess its circulation, hospitalisations and overall impact together, particularly among higher-risk groups.

From an immunological perspective, Dr Gómez Rial explained that the population is no longer facing the virus in the same way as in 2020: “Today, most people have immune memory built up through vaccination, previous infections or both. Although this immunity does not always prevent infection or reinfection, it does enable a much faster and more effective immune response, particularly against severe disease.”

Dr Moraga-Llop, for his part, highlighted that the reduced prominence of COVID-19 today “should not make us forget the need to vaccinate at-risk patients”. The current objective is to maintain their protection against circulating variants and reduce transmission, complications, hospitalisations and mortality.

Different platforms to address different needs

Health experts also discussed the evolution of vaccine technologies. Alongside mRNA and viral vector vaccines, recombinant protein-based vaccines are a platform with extensive previous experience in vaccination, having been used for decades in vaccines such as those against hepatitis B and human papillomavirus (HPV).

Dr Gómez Rial emphasised that recombinant protein-based vaccines “**represent an established platform with extensive experience in vaccination**”. He also explained how new antigen designs are enabling progress towards structure-based vaccinology aimed at optimising and broadening the immune response.

For Dr Tamames, having different platforms “allows us to better respond to each person’s needs and can help encourage more people to get vaccinated”, while Dr Moraga-Llop highlighted the importance of information, active recommendation, healthcare professional training and accessibility in improving vaccination uptake among at-risk groups.

Following the training session, **the journalists visited HIPRA’s facilities**, where they had the opportunity to gain first-hand insight into the company’s vaccine research, development and manufacturing processes, as well as its biotechnology capabilities.

Through initiatives such as this, ANIS and HIPRA are continuing their collaboration to promote greater knowledge of vaccination, prevention and innovation among information professionals, facilitating access to expert sources and tools that help bring rigorous, contextualised and scientifically evidence-based health information to society.

About HIPRA

HIPRA is a biotechnological pharmaceutical company focused on prevention in animal and human health (One Health), with a wide range of highly innovative vaccines and an advanced diagnostic service. With its claim **“Building immunity for a healthier world”**, HIPRA reaffirms its commitment to contributing solutions that improve global health. The company has a strong international presence with **40 subsidiaries, 3 R&D centers and 6 production facilities** strategically located in Europe (Spain) and the Americas (Brazil). In addition, its extensive international distribution network keeps commercial channels open in nearly 100 additional countries, thus covering all five continents.

Research and development are at the core of its expertise. HIPRA invests **around the 15% of its annual revenue to R&D activities** and infrastructure, focused on the creation and application of the latest scientific advances for the development of innovative vaccines of the highest quality. HIPRA has a portfolio of vaccines based on different technological platforms, with R&D teams working with a broad range of technologies and biological modalities.

To add further value to its expertise in vaccination, the company also develops medical devices and traceability services for animal health.

About ANIS

The National Association of Health Information Professionals (ANIS) is Spain’s leading association of **health journalists and health communication professionals**. It currently brings together around **700 members**, including specialized health journalists from across the country representing all media platforms—print, radio, television, and digital media—and working in both general and specialized outlets at national and local levels. The association also includes **communications professionals from healthcare services and centers, institutions, organizations, healthcare companies**, and communications agencies. In addition to journalists and communicators, ANIS counts healthcare professionals from across the sector among its members, including physicians, nurses, and pharmacists.

As a professional association, ANIS operates on a non-profit basis. Its main objectives are to defend the interests and rights of its members within their professional field, promote continuous professional development, and uphold ethical standards in journalism and communication. ANIS is **affiliated with the Federation of Journalists’ Associations of Spain (FAPE)**.

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