

1) Background & purpose of this article

The purpose of this guide to show how our approach to religious guidance, especially when written, must be much more rigorous and solution oriented. We have many sincere scholars, imams and Islamic institutes in the UK, which is beyond doubt, but the sincerity is too often lost in poor reasoning and articulation, or bound to ethnocentric modes of thought, and, in the worst cases, identity politics.

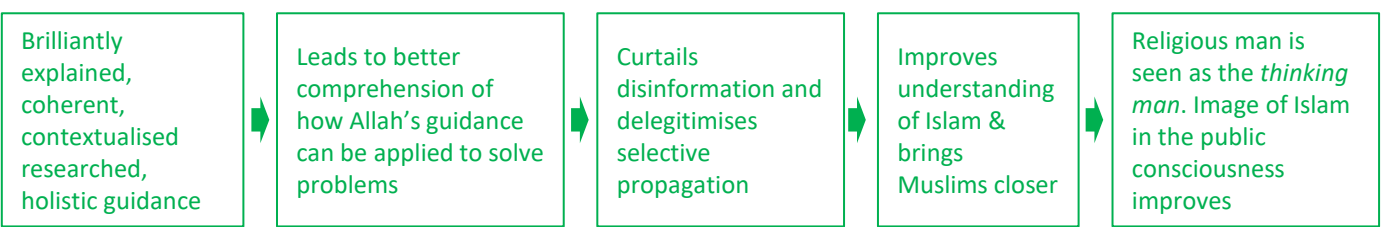
This cycle of inadequacy has knock-on impacts across almost every aspect of the public's consciousness of Islam. We must change this, and the responsibility to do so rests with our generation. The stakes couldn't be any higher: the very confidence in and preservation of Islam among growing numbers of Muslims of the UK requires intelligent, well-reasoned, nuanced and holistic explanations. The legacy of Islamic scholarship is one of engaging the free market of ideas, but for us to be able to do this, we must improve how we apply and convey religious knowledge and understanding.

2) Breaking the cycle of inadequacy

What happens today:



What could happen if we break the cycle of inadequacy:



3) Example: "Pfizer vaccine guidance" (as at 21 Dec 2020, <http://idauk.org>)

⚠ Not secure | idauk.org

- Side note: many websites of Muslim organisations such as in our example (other examples include BBSI, MINAB) don't have SSL certification, which means they are insecure website connections. HTTPS website connection are of course still susceptible to phishing or malware attacks for example, but it is a basic standard of website security today.

Is Pfizer vaccine halāl?

According to the official details provided by the [Government](#), the Pfizer vaccine does not contain any ingredients which will render it impermissible. Therefore it will be halāl and permissible to use.

Is it permissible to take a vaccine although it has side effects?

In principle, if the general side effects of a vaccine are minor along with it being effective in providing immunity from a harmful illness, then it would be permissible to take it.

Is it obligatory to take a vaccine from a Shar'ī perspective?

The necessity to take a vaccine will differ according to a person's personal circumstances. Therefore, first one should consult relevant medical professionals to ascertain his/her medical necessity to take a vaccine. Thereafter, one should consult a proficient Mufti to ascertain the Shar'ī ruling for his/her circumstance.

Is it against tawakkul (having faith in Allāh ta'ālā) to take a vaccine?

The taking of a vaccine does not contradict tawakkul, as long as ones belief is that a vaccine will only protect from the illness if Allāh ta'ālā wills.

Note: The above is a shar'ī ruling. This ruling does not advocate or oppose the taking of the vaccine. Each person should make their own informed choice based upon their own research and advice from reputable

- It is not simply a matter of ingredients. For example, in the context of vaccines, they often contain gelatine as a stabiliser which can be sourced from non-halal animals like pig (skin) or halal animals such as cow. **Note: the Pfizer vaccine does not contain gelatine or any animal-derived products.** Note also, the cholesterol in the Pfizer vaccine does not have animal origin.
- "Ingredients" can also be subject to istihalah (change of form)**, which is a well-known shari'/legal concept whereby the physicochemical alteration of an ingredient renders the ingredient *halal*, though the definition for the extent of such alteration to be considered *istihalah* is not agreed. For example, the tertiary structure of gelatine changes in the process of becoming a soluble molecule from the insoluble collagen it is purified from, which can be argued meets the condition of *istihalah*. Another example is cow dung (impure/*najis* substance) used by the poor to make houses, yet it is permissible to pray *salah* on the floor of such houses on the basis of *istihalah*.
- The amount of the "ingredient" is also another relevant consideration.** Often, trace amounts of impermissible substances are left in the chemical process which isn't normally possible to completely remove (even in a high grade purification process). For example, when making vinegar from alcohol, there is always a trace amount of alcohol left. Based on well-accepted shari'/legal principles, scholars set a maximum threshold for a permissible level of alcohol within vinegar. If they didn't do this it would have been difficult to reconcile the fact that the Prophet consumed vinegar (it is likely that it had a higher content of alcohol than we do today since industrial-grade fermentation processes weren't available at the time). As to what constitutes a permissible level of trace amounts of alcohol in vinegar there is difference of opinion.
- Under dharurah (necessity) conditions something impermissible can become permissible to the extent of meeting the necessity.** This is a well known shari' legal maxim. So even if this vaccine contained *haram* ingredients, the fact that it is life-saving would arguably render it permissible. One of the objectives of Islam (*maqasid*) is to protect life.

- Despite the article title "Pfizer vaccine guidance," this is a very generic statement and ignores the fact that the vaccine has already proved to be >90% effective in clinical trials, has received regulatory approval in the UK, and the NHS has an active strategy of immunising people taking into account other factors.
- It is the role of regulatory bodies (such as the MHRA in the UK) to approve vaccines and drugs. Once approved, for vaccines and drugs to become available on the NHS there are further considerations such as cost-benefit and medical needs/individual health grounds. All of these steps act as further safeguards.

- However, as individuals we contribute towards a collective responsibility to remove the harmful health and economic impacts of the pandemic, so the reason for taking the vaccine necessarily extends beyond a permissibility by virtue of *halal/haram* ingredient, and requires considerations for achieving herd immunity – this is a *dharurah* (necessity). In this sense, at least 60%/70% of the UK's population will need to take the vaccine before we can exit the pandemic. The question is more about what should the priority order be for taking the vaccine? The NHS has already prioritised aged and vulnerable populations first since the mortality rate is highest in these groups. If one refuses the vaccine and this leads to their own illness or others they could be sinful for not taking the necessary protection to prevent harming others and themselves.
- Considering the above, **the religious advice should unambiguously encourage people to take the vaccine if one is offered by the NHS and medical advice permitting.**

- Consulting a *mufti* again is unnecessary since the ruling of permissibility already given means that taking the vaccine is matter of medical guidance.

- Taking the vaccine is actually a positive affirmation of *tawakkul* (reliance in Allah) because Allah has structured the physical world according to laws of nature and phenomena which operate and cause effects in their own relational terms. Allah makes this very clear in many parts of the *Qur'an*. The believer affirms Allah's majesty by recognising these laws or ordered systems (*nizam*) – such as the science behind vaccines – operating independent of, for example, whether we believe or don't believe in God or whether we take guidance from revelation or not, and alongside this affirming Allah's will in the process, that there is God's reality beyond what our senses can perceive. This is one of the meaning of *iman bil ghaib* (belief in the unseen).
- Moreover, the Prophetic order for *tawakkul* in well known hadiths is that one must take the necessary means available – individuals are not removed of their own responsibility to remove harm/protect themselves "because they can rely on Allah."

- This kind of "sitting on the fence" as it were doesn't help religion become more meaningful and makes people of religion look disconnected from real world problems. Especially since there isn't much controversial with taking vaccines unanimously approved by regulatory bodies and whose concerns are due to conspiracy theories and among people who don't understand vaccine technologies.