



PLEASE ENSURE ALL GPs, NURSES AND OTHER INTERESTED STAFF RECEIVE THIS NEWSLETTER

IMMUNISATION NEWSLETTER - APRIL 2007



PANDEMIC INFLUENZA

What is Pandemic Influenza? Pandemic Influenza occurs when there is a significant genetic variation in the influenza virus resulting in a new subtype, to which most people will be susceptible. Previous pandemics have commonly been associated with an attack rate of 25 – 30% of the population (and up to 70%). Such a pandemic in Victoria over 6 – 8 weeks could lead to over 10,000 deaths, 24 000 hospitalisations and 700 000 GP visits!

On 28 March a Pandemic Flu workshop was held at the UNSW Clinical School in Albury. Once again cross-border issues caused plenty of heated discussion!

- Dr Jonathon Anderson (DHS Medical Officer for Public Health) gave an excellent presentation on pandemic flu, planning for a pandemic, and the role of general practice in Victoria in a pandemic outbreak.
- Tony Kolbe (GSAH Public Health Officer) then presented the NSW perspective on handling a pandemic, and the role of general practice in a pandemic outbreak.

Guess what?? They're different!

In VIC it is expected that GPs will treat influenza patients, and GPs will be supplied with antiviral medication.

In NSW GPs will not treat influenza patients and will not be supplied with antiviral medication. All suspected influenza cases will be triaged (over the phone or at the clinic door) and sent to the nearest Pandemic Influenza Clinic which will have been set up at a nearby hospital.

I can only imagine the confusion and frustration this would cause on The Border, both for GPs and patients. It was suggested that the Division (in consultation with both State Health Departments, local government, etc) should come up with a workable solution for pandemic flu on the Border.

Apparently we're miracle workers!

Feel free to email me any suggestions you may have, and I will forward them onto DHS and NSW Health. And please consider preparing a workplan for your practice to prepare for a possible influenza pandemic. It is too late to start planning when the first patient with suspected H5N1 human influenza walks into your practice!

All Victorian practices should have received a "Preparing for an Influenza Pandemic information kit and workplan" form DHS recently. If you don't have a copy or would like further assistance to develop your plan, please contact DHS on 03 9096 5207. Alternatively, for fact sheets or the VIC Influenza Pandemic Flu Plan go to www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas/regulations/vic_influenza.htm.

For NSW practices, the VIC plan has some excellent advice and information, so you may also like to check out the above site. Also the Australian Government Dept of Health and Ageing site: www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/Pandemic+Influenza-1.

For anyone who missed this workshop or would like to know more, see Educational Events and Training in this newsletter for the RACGP Pandemic Flu workshop in Albury 16 June 2007.



INFLUENZA VACCINATION

Have you and your staff been vaccinated?

Historically there has been a very low uptake of flu vaccination by healthcare workers in Australia, which leaves vulnerable patients at risk of potential complications. The evidence to support influenza vaccination of healthcare workers is robust, and it is well documented that influenza is a far more serious disease than people believe, with an estimated 1,500 Australians dying from influenza-related complications. Despite overwhelming data and recommendations from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), in support of influenza vaccination of health care workers, 2006 research estimates that **between 50-80 percent of healthcare workers are not getting vaccinated**. Healthcare workers have a duty of care to their patients, and through vaccination, healthcare workers can help to protect patients against transmission of this highly contagious disease. All staff working in GP surgeries, are strongly recommended to have the vaccine, to protect themselves, their colleagues, their family and also those patients attending the surgery.

Myths surrounding flu vaccination:

- **Influenza vaccine gave my neighbour/friend/brother/mother/child the flu!**

WRONG! This is not possible, because it is not a live virus vaccine. Some people experience mild fever after receiving the vaccine but this is *not* the flu. Protection is usually achieved within 10 – 14 days, so the vaccinated individual may still get the flu during that period. In healthy people, the vaccine is 70 – 90% effective so a small percentage of vaccinated people may still get the flu after vaccination. The vaccine *did not* cause the flu in these people!

True contra-indications to influenza vaccination:

- Anaphylactic hypersensitivity to eggs or any of the other vaccine components
- Acute febrile illness (temp above 38.5°C)
- Patients with a history of Guillain-Barre syndrome

The following are NOT contra-indications of influenza vaccination:

- Asthma, mild fever, pregnancy (including first trimester), allergies (other than mentioned above), cardiac disease, lung disease, diabetes, immune deficiency, **fear of needles!**

Influenza vaccination in children:

There have been some recommendations in the draft 2007 immunisation handbook - please follow these guidelines.

- Two doses at least one month apart are recommended for children aged less than 9 years who are receiving influenza vaccine for the first time. The same vial should not be re-used for the 2 doses.
- Increased dose for the 3-6 year age group from 0.25 to 0.5ml.

If you have any children attending your immunisation service requesting opportunistic influenza vaccine it is recommended to use the above dosage schedules.

COLD CHAIN

Have your new vaccines arrived safely?

Never assume that the new supply of vaccine you have just received is all OK!

Always assume the supply of vaccine you have just received *may* have had a cold chain breach!.....

So carefully check the cold chain monitors that are transported with the vaccines, and if there is any sign of a cold chain breach, contact your supplier, (and for NSW – the CPH unit).

Case Study

A BDGP practice recently received a consignment of vaccine in two storage containers. The cold chain monitor in one container was fine; the cold chain monitor in the other container had changed colour. It was wedged between the wall of the container and the freeze block, so may have been exposed to direct contact with the freeze block causing the colour change. A phone call to the vaccine supplier resulted in a test to determine if the monitor had been exposed to excessively cold temperatures, (it had!) and the vaccine was considered not viable.

Don't risk giving your patients non-viable vaccine – if in doubt, check it out!

Medi-log – new fridge thermometer with min, max and alarm that will indicate how long temperature has been outside range. Enables you to determine if vaccines are still safe to use. Cost \$95. If anyone would like more info, contact Daria Ross of HLP Controls on 03 95809070 mb 0412163 953.

ROTAVIRUS VACCINATION



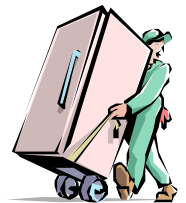
Rotavirus vaccination joins the National Immunisation Program!

From 1st July 2007, all babies born after 1 May 2007 will be eligible for free Rotavirus vaccine. The new vaccine will be given to babies aged 2 – 6 months of age, and is an oral vaccine.

At this stage we do not know which of the two available vaccines will be used in NSW and VIC (But if past history is anything to go by, you can be fairly certain they'll be different – just to turn our hair a little greyer here on the Border!)

- **Rotarix (GSK) is a 2 dose course oral vaccine that requires reconstitution.**
- **RotaTeq (CSL) is a 3 dose course oral vaccine that does not require reconstitution.**

Will you have the fridge capacity to store both Rotavirus vaccine for infants, and HPV vaccine for adults when they are introduced from July 2007?
(In addition to all the vaccines on the schedule now + Fluvax?)
Don't wait until the vaccines arrive to discover you have no fridge space for them!
Be prepared. Call Kerry on 6049 1904 if you would like information on vaccine fridges.



HPV (GARDASIL) VACCINATION PROGRAM – COMMENCED

What? Why? Who? Where? When?



- WHAT?** Gardasil protects females from infection with Human Papilla Virus (types 6, 11, 16, 18)
Want to know more about the vaccine?
- WHY?** HPV (types 6, 11, 16, 18) cause approx 70% of cervical cancers and 90% of genital warts.
Want to know more about the evidence behind this vaccination program?
- WHO?** All females aged 12 years to 26 years are eligible for free Gardasil vaccine.
Want to know more about who might benefit from vaccination and why?
- WHERE?** Females aged 12 – 18 can be vaccinated for free in **school based programs**. Females aged 18 – 26 years (and females aged 12 – 18 who missed the school vaccination program) can be vaccinated with free vaccine **by GPs or council clinics**.
Want to know what your role in this program involves?
- WHEN?** School vaccination programs for girls aged 12 – 18 years have begun in April and will continue throughout 2007 and 2008. Gardasil will be part of the usual schedule for Year 7 girls from 2009 onward.
GPs and council clinics will be able to start vaccinating 18 – 26 year old women from July 2007. Free vaccine for this age group will cease in July 2009.
Want to know about Pap screening? Vaccination registers? Number of doses? Efficacy? Patient education? Vaccinating males?
Come to the HPV/Rotavirus update on 26th April at UNSW Clinical School!

EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING

1. GSAHS Immunisation update for NSW nurses

Date: Thursday 26th April 2007, 9:30am – 3pm

Venue: Commercial Club, Albury

- essential for accredited nurse immunisers who must attend an update every 12 months to maintain accreditation, and if they wish to be able to administer HPV or Rotavirus vaccine; also recommended for all practice nurses in NSW clinics.

Please register with Rebecca or Sue at the Centre for Public Health on 6021 4799

2. Gardasil - HPV Cervical Cancer Vaccine and Rotavirus workshop

Date: Thursday 26th April 2007, 6:30pm

Venue: UNSW Clinical School, Albury Base Hospital

Guest speaker: Dr Greg Rowles (GP advisor on immunisation for AGPN)

To register, please contact Kerry at the Division on 6049 1904

Open to GPs, practice nurses and interested staff

3. Infection Control and Pandemic Planning (*2nd pandemic flu workshop to be held in Albury*)

Date: Saturday 16 June 2007, 9am to 4pm

Venue: Commercial Club, Albury

To register please contact Emma Stonham at the RACGP Victoria Faculty on Tel: 03 8699 0468

The RACGP is holding Infection Control and Pandemic Planning workshops in various locations around Australia. This workshop will present an interactive case study, epidemiology of pandemic influenza, correct use of personal protective equipment, and drafting your own influenza action plans. Very positive feedback has been received from workshops already conducted.

RACGP (30 Category 1 points), AAPM (1 point per hour), ACRRM (8 PDP points) and APNA points have been approved.

We have been asked to promote this RACGP workshop which is apparently still worth attending even if you attended the previous DHS & GSAH pandemic flu workshop held in March. The RACGP workshop is open to all GPs, nurses, practice staff, division staff and anyone working in health.