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Dear Colleague

JCVI ADVICE ON THE PNEUMOCOCCAL VACCINATION PROGRAMME FOR PEOPLE AGED 65 YEARS AND OLDER

Introduction

1. I am writing to inform you about updated advice received from the Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) regarding the routine pneumococcal vaccination programme for those aged 65 years and older. **Essentially the key message is that the routine vaccination programme offering a single once-only pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccination is to continue unchanged.**

Background

2. Under this programme, a single dose of pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (PPV) has been offered to all those aged 65 years and older for a number of years.

3. In March this year the JCVI issued a statement that the routine pneumococcal vaccination programme for those aged 65 years and over would be discontinued, with vaccination continuing amongst those with risk factors in this age group, based on clinical judgement. This position was based on evidence available to the JCVI at the time.

4. Following this statement the Department of Health undertook a consultation with interested parties to determine whether or not there was any other additional information or evidence that might further inform the JCVI's opinion. As a result of this JCVI received a number of submissions from a range of organisations, and these were considered by the pneumococcal sub-committee of the JCVI.

5. The JCVI main committee subsequently considered these further analyses and their conclusions have been published in their statement of 20 July 2011 (available at: http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh.digitalasset/s/@dh/@ab/documents/digitalasset/dh_128704.pdf.)

From the Chief Medical Officer

Sir Harry Burns MPH
FRCS(Glas) FRCP(Ed) FFPH

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Addresses

For action

NHS Board Chief Executives
NHS Board Immunisation
Co-ordinators
NHS Board Medical Directors
NHS Board Nursing Directors

For information

CHP Managers
Practice Managers
NHS Board Communication Directors
NHS Board Directors of Public Health
NHS Board Chairs
General Practitioners
Directors of Pharmacy
Practice Nurses
Health Visitors
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JCVI Statement

6. As set out in their July statement, the JCVI has concluded that, whilst uncertainty remains about the effectiveness of PPV, there is better evidence from the UK experience of the vaccine suggesting that PPV provides some moderate short-term protection to those aged 65 and older.

7. The JCVI does however note that protection may be less and wane faster in older age groups, and for some clinical risk groups. However, JCVI considers the findings of the new analysis suggest that the programme remains cost effective, despite the limited effectiveness of the vaccine, and may be more cost effective than implementing a risk group based programme. JCVI recognised that the cost effectiveness of the programme is due primarily to the relative low cost of the vaccination programme (provided the vaccine is administered routinely with the seasonal influenza vaccine).

8. For these reasons, JCVI has advised that the existing routine universal PPV programme for those aged 65 and older should continue, but be kept under review. Reconsideration of evidence by JCVI is anticipated within 2 years.

Action

8. NHS Boards and Primary Care are therefore asked to continue to offer pneumococcal vaccination to those aged over 65 in line with current guidance. Clinicians should continue to follow the existing guidance on the use of PPV in the Green Book: http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh.digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_122639.pdf

9. The SCIMP website provides very good information and guidance on coding, recording exceptions as well as links to relevant documents. Colleagues in GP practice or within NHS Boards with general queries about data extraction and coding, should refer to the SCIMP website in the first instance <http://www.scimp.scot.nhs.uk/>

10. The current Directed Enhanced Service (DES) and associated Directions which require Boards to set up an Influenza and Pneumococcal Immunisation Scheme were issued on 30 September 2010 (Circular PCA(M)(2010)16) and 24 March 2011(PCA(M)(2011)05). These can be found online at: [http://www.show.scot.nhs.uk/sehd/pca/PCA2010\(M\)16.pdf](http://www.show.scot.nhs.uk/sehd/pca/PCA2010(M)16.pdf) and [http://www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/pca/PCA2011\(M\)05.pdf](http://www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/pca/PCA2011(M)05.pdf) The DES applies **to all groups recommended by the JCVI and accepted nationally** (i.e. pneumococcal immunisation payment will be available for immunising those aged 65 and over). Pneumococcal payments will be made throughout the period 1 April to 31 March of the relevant financial year (as it is undertaken throughout the year, unlike flu immunisation). Updated advice on a new DES will follow in due course.

11. As usual, information leaflets for those over the age of 65, will be provided by the Scottish Government to support the routine vaccination programme. These will be sent to GP practices and NHS Boards at the same time as seasonal flu materials are distributed (expected to be early September). There will be a facility available to order additional materials if required. The Immunisation Scotland website also provides up-to-date information and is available at: <http://www.immunisationscotland.org.uk>.

Yours sincerely

Harry Burns

SIR HARRY BURNS