Coverage update from Dr Pat Tuohy
Thanks for your continued hard work in maintaining infant immunisation. Coverage for the quarter ending 31 December was 93.3 percent, a small increase on the previous quarter. Coverage for our Pacific population was the highest it has ever been at 96.5 percent and Māori coverage was 90.8 percent. Coverage at age 5 years continues to increase and reached 88.6 percent in this quarter.

Entering HPV vaccines in your PMS
We appreciate the extra work practices have been doing with the expanded criteria for HPV immunisation. We expect distribution of HPV9 to practices will begin in most regions within the next few weeks – please continue to use your stocks of HPV4 until they run out. We have noticed that some vaccinators have been recording the administration of HPV9 vaccine in error, when they have in fact given HPV4 vaccine. Please use the correct schedule for the vaccine you have given. If you have incorrectly recorded an HPV vaccine, please ensure you amend the Patient Record to capture the correct HPV4 details so that messaging to the NIR is accurate. For more information please refer to your PMS instructions.

Proposal for pharmacists to provide funded vaccines
PHARMAC is currently consulting on proposed changes to the New Zealand Pharmaceutical Schedule that will enable pharmacist vaccinators, who meet the Ministry of Health’s criteria, to provide funded influenza vaccinations to those aged 65 years and over and pregnant women. Widening access to the influenza vaccine for these vulnerable groups aims to improve uptake among eligible individuals, especially for those who have difficulty accessing general practices, reduce hospitalisations and improve health outcomes for vulnerable population groups.

The NIR web application ImmuniseNow will be used by pharmacist vaccinators this year to send influenza vaccine messages to the NIR. Pharmacists are still required to notify GPs when they have administered an influenza vaccine to their patients so their records can be updated e.g. via fax. It is planned for this process to be fully automated in the future.

Individuals who receive vaccinations from a pharmacist vaccinator will also be encouraged to notify their health professional via their online patient portal, if they use this service.

Influenza
This year’s Influenza Immunisation Programme will be officially launched on 6 April but you may commence vaccinating before this date to ensure your patients are offered protection before winter hits. Please ensure you have 2017 influenza vaccine stock in your refrigerator, if you have any 2016 influenza vaccines please send them to ProPharma for safe destruction.

INFLUVAC® is the only funded vaccine for all eligible patients and therefore claim submissions for any other influenza vaccine will not be accepted. This year, the vaccine includes one new strain, A/Michigan/45/2015 (H1N1)-like virus.
Healthcare Logistics will begin sending the funded vaccine to providers with pre-orders commencing on 6 March. Vaccine can be ordered online at www.hcl.co.nz or the form can be downloaded from www.influenza.org.nz

Influenza Kit 2017
The 2017 Influenza Kit is now being posted to practices, and is available for download from www.influenza.org.nz/resources. A starter pack of printed resources will be sent to providers in an initial mail out – this will also include brochures for pregnant women. You can order these print resources online at www.influenza.org.nz/resources from 1 March.

Extension to the end of the Influenza Immunisation Programme
The funded influenza vaccine will be available until 31 December each year for those at greatest risk from influenza (i.e. pregnant women, those 65 years and over and those under 65 with certain medical conditions) and who were not vaccinated before or during winter.

Recording influenza immunisation on the NIR
From 2017/18, coverage of influenza immunisation for those aged 65 years and over will be a DHB performance measure with a target of 75 percent coverage. It is important that all influenza immunisations given at general practices and pharmacies are recorded on the NIR, via your PMS or the new ImmuniseNow application, so that this measure is accurate and local targets can be achieved.

How to record vaccinations on the NIR:
- To record an adult’s influenza vaccine on the NIR, select the opt-on button on your PMS.
- For adults not wanting their influenza vaccine recorded on the NIR please leave the opt-on field blank. The information will only be recorded on your PMS and will not be sent to the NIR.
- To help avoid errors in recording influenza on the NIR:
  - Ensure you have the most up to date PMS software version.
  - Send a list of any changes to the vaccinators and GPs who will deliver the influenza vaccine in your facility to your local DHB NIR administrator before the beginning of the influenza season to ensure they are entered into the system. This is critical to ensure your data messages go to the NIR without causing an error in the system.
  - Vaccinators should validate patients’ addresses in all address fields before they are messaged to the NIR.
  - The provider should be noted as the “GP” and the nurse the “vaccinator”.

An influenza coverage report is available for providers including general practice with access to Business objects NIR Datamart, or by request from your local DHB NIR administrator. The report provides information by district health board, primary health organisation, ethnicity and deprivation.

Higher risk of increased morbidity and mortality due to A(H3N2)
Given the predominance of Influenza A(H3N2) in the northern hemisphere, it is possible that this strain will also predominate in New Zealand this winter. A(H3N2) has historically been associated with higher morbidity and mortality, particularly in the older population.

Measles and mumps
Over recent months there have been cases of measles and mumps reported in New Zealand. Please continue to check your patient’s immunisation records and encourage those who are not fully vaccinated with MMR to be vaccinated. Those born from 1 January 1969 are eligible for free MMR vaccinations. The MMR vaccine can be given at the same time as the influenza and HPV vaccines.

If you have any queries about anything in this update, please email immunisation@moh.govt.nz