Dear Colleagues,

**Flu immunisation programme 2013**
Distribution of flu vaccine for the 2013 influenza season commenced on 25 February 2013.

Around 200,000 vaccines have already been distributed. The public launch of the programme is being held at Karori Medical Centre tomorrow (12 March). Health Minister Tony Ryall will attend, along with Mark McIlroy whose wife died last year from influenza.

Practices need to order their influenza vaccine using the ‘2013 Season influenza vaccine order form’. These are available online at [http://www.hconline.co.nz](http://www.hconline.co.nz).

The aim this season is to increase influenza vaccine coverage to 1.2 million doses compared to just over 1 million in 2012. Your help is needed to achieve this coverage. Useful patient recall letters can be found on the National influenza Specialist Group (NISG) website [http://www.influenza.org.nz/?t=890](http://www.influenza.org.nz/?t=890).

Most of the deaths associated with influenza generally occur in those aged 65 and over. Recent surveillance reports from the United States show that those in this age group also had relatively high hospitalisation rates over their 2012/13 influenza season.

Immunisation against influenza is the best preventative method available. Please ensure that you identify your eligible populations early, particularly those over aged 65 over, and begin re-calling patients.

FLUVAX (9-years and over) and FLUARIX (under 9-years-old) are again the two funded vaccines available in New Zealand. These vaccines will protect against most of the strains that are currently circulating in the Northern Hemisphere. The exception is the B/Victoria lineage of viruses, though this is not expected to be a significant strain in the 2013 influenza season in New Zealand.

The vaccines available in New Zealand during 2013 will provide protection against the following strains:

- A/California/7/2009 (H1N1) pdm09-like virus
- A/Victoria/361/2011 (H3N2) – like virus
- B/Wisconsin/1/2010 - like virus

The eligibility criteria for funded influenza vaccine remains the same; pregnant women, people aged 65-years and over and those with eligible long term health conditions, except in Canterbury where children under 18 are also eligible for free flu vaccine.

Immunisation benefit and vaccine claims for eligible patients need to be submitted within eight months of the date the patient was immunised. Funded flu vaccines must be administered before 31 July 2013. This includes completing the second dose for those aged under nine years.

**Cold chain policy**
The Ministry has reviewed its cold chain policy and accompanying template. These will be sent to all vaccinators. Please make sure you are familiar with the national policy and have a local policy in place to manage the cold chain process. Useful documents regarding cold chain can be found on the Ministry’s website: [http://www.health.govt.nz/publication/annual-cold-chain-management-guide-and-record](http://www.health.govt.nz/publication/annual-cold-chain-management-guide-and-record).
Whooping cough

Pregnant women

We note that the number of claims for pregnant women is low. Please ensure you are encouraging with patients who are pregnant to consider being immunised in their third trimester.

When claiming for Boostrix vaccination events given to pregnant women “Pregnant dTap 28-38 wks” needs to be selected manually. Note that when administering this vaccine, the outcome “Alternative Given” will not be available to select. This vaccine will generate the claim as normal.

Pertussis treatment and prophylaxis

Both Azithromycin liquid (as of 1 November 2012) and tablets (as of 1 December 2012) are now fully funded alternative treatments for adults and infants. In general, courses are restricted to five days.

The following schedule is recommended for the treatment and prophylaxis of pertussis:

- Infants and children: Day 1: 10mg/kg/day in a single daily dose (max 500mg day 1); Days 2-5: 5mg/kg/day in a single daily dose (max 250mg per day)
- Adults: Day 1: 500mg as a single dose; Days 2-5: 250mg once daily.

Outbreak update

New cases of pertussis continue to occur at high rates. From the start of the outbreak in August 2011 to 22 February 2013, there have been a total of 8,249 cases (confirmed, probable and suspect) and 465 hospitalisations. Infants (under one year old) are the population at highest risk of serious outcomes and since the start of the outbreak have accounted for 582 cases (7 percent) and 278 of all hospitalisations (60 percent).

From 9 February 2013 to 22 February 2013, 191 new cases were reported, 11 of these cases (6 percent) were infants. The highest numbers of cases have been notified from Canterbury (44 cases) and Waikato and Capital and Coast (21 cases each) DHBs.

The latest pertussis hospitalisation case numbers by DHB can be found here http://www.surv.esr.cri.nz/PDF_surveillance/PertussisRpt/2013/PertussisreportJanuary2013.pdf

Infant immunisation programme

Timely immunisations continue to increase with 89 percent of all eight-month-olds fully immunised. Achieving the Government target of 85 percent so soon after the target started confirms your commitment to reaching all children, but there is still room for improvement as only 83 percent of Maori children are fully immunised. We are charged with increasing coverage to 95 percent by December 2014, so quality improvement/local data analysis efforts that are embedded into your practices now will support the long term gains that are expected next year.
Assisted funding for patients

Newborn enrolment - PMS
Please remember to check that your practice management system still messages through to the NIR following any upgrade. Upgrades can often be the cause of the NIR not receiving up-to-date immunisation information and vaccine events not messaged will not be included in local or national reports. If the newborn's immunisation record is incomplete on the NIR, it may continue to message the PMS system as overdue. So please ensure your HealthLink is fully functional after any upgrade at your practice.

Any questions, please contact your local NIR team or ask your local PHO IT resource for assistance.

New Zealand Immunisation Conference 2013
The eighth New Zealand Immunisation Conference is being held this year from 10-12 September 2013 at the Waipuna Hotel and Conference Centre in Auckland.

Calls for abstracts opened in November last year and registrations for the conference opened on 5 March 2013. The key note speaker is Dr Marc LaForce who led the development, licensing and introduction of MenAfriVac, the first vaccine designed specifically for Africa.

Conference themes are: disease control, global lessons, vaccine safety, communications, new schedules and future vaccines. For more information or to register for to [www.imac2013.co.nz](http://www.imac2013.co.nz)

Childhood obesity survey
Thanks to all those who have participated in the Obesity Survey so far. The response rate still remains low and we are keen to hear your views on how we can combat childhood obesity.


A paper version of the survey is also available on request (please email: nitin_rajput@moh.govt.nz). All those who complete the survey will go into a draw to wind $100 voucher.

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