Dear Colleagues

Thank you all for your hard work and support this year and best wishes from the Immunisation team for happy and healthy festive season. Also please watch out for a special edition of the GP Fax in the New Year regarding the Ministry's Immunisation e-learning tool.

Patient Precall over the holiday season

As families turn their attention to Christmas and travel plans over summer it can be a difficult time to recall children for their scheduled immunisations. Thank you in advance for following up families who will be due for immunisation during this next quarter by sending them a precall message.

Pertussis Outbreak

In the last two weeks of November, 227 cases of pertussis were reported, including 25 cases (11 percent) in infants. The highest numbers of cases have been notified from Canterbury (49 cases) Hutt Valley, Waikato and Wairarapa (21 cases each) DHBs. All DHBs except Tairawhiti and West Coast have reported pertussis cases in the last two weeks.

Since the current outbreak began in August 2011 to 30 November 2012, there have been a total of 6790 cases (confirmed, probable and suspect) and 368 hospitalisations.


In the current outbreak, on time immunisation has been protecting infants from more severe disease. Of those infants who were hospitalised with pertussis, 43 percent were immunised, whereas 70 percent of infants who developed pertussis and were immunised, did not require hospitalisation.

Pertussis treatment and prophylaxis

Both Azithromycin liquid (as of 1 November) 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.

Pertussis vaccine booster in pregnant women

PHARMAC’s consultation on extending eligibility criteria for funded pertussis boosters to include pregnant women closed on 29 November. If approved by the PHARMAC board the vaccine would be fully funded for pregnant women between 28 and 38 weeks gestation and would take effect from 1 January 2013.

Prescription Charges

From 1 January 2013, the pharmacy co-payment increases from $3 to $5 per new prescription item - the first increase to the prescription charge in 20 years.
Over the next three months, the Ministry of Health will distribute tear-off pads with information for consumers about the co-payment increase to general practices and pharmacies. Details about the Pharmaceutical Subsidy Card will also be included.

The information outlines payment for prescription costs for people who receive a Disability Allowance. It is important they contact Work and Income (0800 559 009) or Senior Services (0800 552 002) straight away when their costs change.

The pads will be delivered to your general practice, and extra stock will be available for order on the Ministry’s website. The Ministry’s consumer and health sector web pages on www.health.govt.nz will be updated to reflect the change.

Ordering Prevenar 13
Prevenar 13 is funded for children under five years of age who qualify for the High Risk Pneumococcal Programme (refer page 193-97X Immunisation Handbook 2011), and children up to the age of 16 pre and post-splenectomy. Please do not stockpile doses of Prevenar 13 as it is only available on an ‘as needed basis’ for eligible children.

If you need more than one dose, please send a fax order form to your regional ProPharma store with the number of doses you require. The fax order can be downloaded from www.fundedvaccines.co.nz.

Annual Cold Chain Management Guide
The Ministry has been updating the guide for use by immunisation clinics and includes pages for providers to document their daily vaccine fridge recordings. The guide, previously published by IMAC, will be available on the Ministry website at www.health.govt.nz/publications during the week commencing 17 December. Hard copies will be available later in January from Wickliffe. Please call 04 496 2277 to order or place an order on the guide’s web page.

Year seven and eight consent forms for school-based programmes and non-school based information sheets
The Immunisation team is currently working with Leaning Media to finalise the forms for next year. Several changes have been made to both, including the privacy statement and NIR consent section on the Year Seven forms as well as the inclusion of GP details in the non-consent section of both forms.

The forms will be available in late January 2013 next year on the Health Education website www.healthed.govt.nz.

Infectious and Notifiable Diseases Order 2012
From Thursday 13 December 2012, there will be some minor changes to the Health Act 1956 Schedule of Infectious Diseases that are notifiable by GPs and laboratories to the local Medical Officer of Health.

There are four changes to the Schedule. One of these changes is a re-naming of the infectious bacterium Enterobacter sakazakii due to reclassification. This bacterium is now called Cronobacter. The second change is the addition of Q fever, an infection caused by Coxiella burnetii, as a new notifiable disease. The other two changes broaden current notification requirements: as well as Rabies, other lyssaviruses are now notifiable, along with Verotoxin or Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli (VTEC/STEC).


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