



# Primary Source Immunisation

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## From the Immunisation Principal Network Adviser

Natural disasters seem to be filling the calendar this year. The floods in Queensland and Victoria, then the earthquakes in New Zealand and Japan have tested people and services to the nth degree. Our thoughts and sympathies are with the thousands of people affected by these events in all areas.

Rebuilding communities will take time and health matters will be of prime importance now and during the rebuilding processes. In Australia, general practice networks are part of their communities and have been thoroughly involved in areas of need, assisting with immediate help and supporting the ongoing rebuilding process. Maintaining immunisation coverage is an imperative as we know it provides a cornerstone for population health and protection against those vaccine preventable diseases. Keep up the wonderful work!

**Helen Moore Immunisation Principal Network Adviser**

## Influenza season is almost here

The 2011 influenza season was launched on **National Flu Day, March 15** with a very strong emphasis on ensuring everyone is vaccinated to protect against the flu this year. Over the past few years we have had the pandemic H1N1 vaccine, last year's trivalent vaccine to protect against the three dominant strains and the same vaccine again this year. The vaccine is the same as last year's, but as the vaccine protects for about a year, another dose is needed now to ensure adequate protection and to maintain immunity. The northern hemisphere flu season showed very high levels of infections and hospitalisations and also an increase in the number of flu related deaths.

As stated in the 9<sup>th</sup> Edition Australian Immunisation Handbook, flu vaccine is recommended for anyone over six months of age who wishes to reduce the 'likelihood of becoming ill with influenza' and is strongly recommended and funded by the Commonwealth for

- all adults aged 65 years and older

A blue banner for the National Forum. The text on the banner reads: 'National Forum' in large white letters, 'Australia's premier primary health care forum' in smaller white letters, '16-19 November 2011' in white letters, and 'Melbourne Convention Exhibition Centre' in white letters.

National Forum  
Australia's premier primary  
health care forum  
16-19 November 2011  
Melbourne Convention Exhibition Centre

[Click here to view the events calendar.](#)

- Pregnant women
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years and over
- Anyone six months of age or over who has a chronic medical condition such as asthma, lung or heart disease, low immunity or diabetes.

For information or to order resources go to the following websites;

[www.immunise.health.gov.au](http://www.immunise.health.gov.au)

<http://www.influenzaspecialistgroup.org.au/>

## Flu Clinics

Organising and running a flu vaccination clinic to facilitate the uptake of the seasonal flu vaccine is always encouraged. It enables providers to reach people who otherwise may not have time to schedule a visit for their immunisation or who can happily excuse the lack of vaccination because of inconvenience.

Following questions from practices in various jurisdictions we have asked for clarification from the Commonwealth on the benefits payable by Medicare Australia for flu clinics. The following information was sent by the Commonwealth but can also be found on the MBS.

The Department of Health and Ageing policy is detailed in the 1 January 2011 MBS book G12.3. *'Medicare benefits are payable for a professional attendance that includes an immunisation, provided that the actual administration of the vaccine is not specifically funded through any other Commonwealth or State Government program, nor through an international or private organisation. The location of the service, or advertising of it, or the number of patients presenting together for it, normally do not indicate a mass immunisation'*.

In a nut shell, providers can run flu clinics for their patients and claim the appropriate item numbers as long as they are not already being paid for that service by another party. They cannot be paid twice for the same service.

## Rural Health – Influenza are you ready?

Rural Health Education Foundation is holding a **live satellite broadcast on influenza** as part of its current education program. This broadcast will be live on **March 22 at 8pm Sydney time** (AEST) and repeated on Friday March 25.

This program will include influenza updates to the NIP schedule as well as recent outbreaks and pandemics. There will be a focus on the benefits, risk factors and impact of flu vaccines across age groups and special population groups. Chaired by Dr Norman Swan the panel will include:

- Professor Jim Bishop (the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing Chief Medical Officer), Professor Robert Booy

- Mrs Rachel Denaar
- Dr Leanne Jones
- Ms Kerry Lajoie

Program information can be found on the [www.rhef.com.au](http://www.rhef.com.au) website or specifically at [http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/program-1/?program\\_id=560](http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/program-1/?program_id=560)

## Q Fever website

In a year with a great deal of rain and mud, Q fever may not be the highest priority for some communities. However, as the mud dries and dust returns it will be important to ensure that those at risk of contracting Q fever have the option of immunisation protection. The CSL developed and manufactured vaccine has been available for some time and now a website has been launched to provide vital information and education to those health care professionals administering this vaccine.

The website can be accessed by going to the following address [www.csl.com.au](http://www.csl.com.au) then typing **Q VAX** into the search engine and then clicking on the first **Q VAX** link. As the site is password protected you will need the following [these are both case sensitive].

- User name; **QVAXHCP**
- password; **QFever2011**

The website contains the following information for healthcare professionals:

- General information on Q Fever [including disease symptoms, transmission etc]
- Tips and photos on how to administer the skin test
- Interpretation of serology and skin test results
- The education DVD with Dr Krysz Szatsznajder
- The PDF of the Q Fever handbook *A guide to Q Fever and Q Fever vaccination*
- The Q Fever Consumer Medicine Information [CMI]
- The Q Fever Product Information [PI]

If you require further information please contact CSL Medical Information on 1800 642 865

## HPV website

The Victorian Cancer Council has launched a new website to provide information to parents and teenage girls about the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine and the links between HPV and cervical cancer. The vaccine is free to girls aged 12 to 13 years and is provided through school based programs across the country. General

practice is able to provide the funded vaccine to those girls who miss out or are unable to be vaccinated at school.

Only 75 percent of girls are taking up the free vaccine and many more not completing the three doses. The latest research indicates that both girls and their parents have low awareness of HPV, the disease caused and how the vaccine works. The website contains very tailored information for girls and parents including videos and other resources. It also contains information for providers and for those running vaccination clinics in a school setting. This website [www.cervicalcervaccine.org.au](http://www.cervicalcervaccine.org.au) has been developed to help increase awareness of HPV, the ease of transmission and the links to cervical cancer.

## National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS) news

NCIRS has added an **Adult Vaccination Fact Sheet** to its website to give an overview of vaccines provided for adults under the Australian National Immunisation Program and those recommended for adults in the current 9<sup>th</sup> edition of the Australian Immunisation Handbook.

<http://www.ncirs.edu.au/immunisation/fact-sheets>

Other Fact Sheets on vaccine preventable diseases and vaccine safety can be found on the website under the Immunisation Resources section of this site <http://www.ncirs.edu.au/>

## Nominations for the National Primary Health Care Awards open in March 2011

Australia's frontline health service providers will now be able to achieve well earned recognition and rewards for outstanding performance through the inaugural **HESTA Primary Health Care Awards**.

HESTA in conjunction with AGPN created these awards to mark excellence in primary health care.

HESTA CEO Ms Anne-Marie Corboy said the awards were designed to recognise innovation and leadership.

"These are two fundamental elements of a skilled and responsive health workforce," Ms Corboy said.

AGPN CEO David Butt said the awards were timely in light of the incredible health reform agenda facing this sector.

"These awards recognise the role of all those who are usually the first the community turns to when they are sick or injured," Mr Butt said.

**ME Bank has provided \$25,000 in prize money** for the awards which will culminate in a gala dinner at the AGPN's National Forum, to which finalists will be flown.

There are three categories for nominations:

**Young leader**

**Individual distinction**



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