Thanks in advance

We recently informed the health sector of a delay in the arrival of the funded influenza vaccine to the first week of April. We appreciate that this delay, alongside the introduction of shingles vaccine, is likely to mean heavier workloads for general practices over the coming months. We would like to take the opportunity to thank you in advance for your efforts in protecting our community, particularly our older people at this time of year.

Gardasil 9 supplies postponed to General Practices

PHARMAC advises that there will be limited supply of Gardasil 9 (HPV) vaccine until September 2018, due to ongoing global supply constraints. Until the release of new stock in September, distribution of the remaining stock will be limited to school based programmes and the high risk groups identified in the National Immunisation Schedule criteria – that is, people aged 9 to 26 inclusive with HIV infection, transplant patients (including stem cells) or post chemotherapy.

General Practices and other vaccinators will be able to order a maximum of one pack through the ProPharma website for high risk groups.

Practices with patients who need to complete their final (second or third) vaccination in accordance with the recommended vaccination administration period should delay these doses until September where possible, taking into account that the Gardasil 9 data sheet notes that the final dose should be given within one year of the initial dose.

Vaccinators should not start new patients on Gardasil 9 until the new supply is confirmed in September 2018, unless they are high-risk as noted above. Vaccinators who have patients currently aged 26 can delay their first dose of the vaccine due to the shortage and submit a manual claim for the administration of their vaccine. The final date for such manual claims will be advised in future communication once normal supply has resumed.

If you have any questions regarding Gardasil 9 vaccine supply please contact PHARMAC, ph 0800 660 050 or email enquiry@pharmac.govt.nz.

Influenza Immunisation Programme

There are two funded quadrivalent vaccines this year –

- Influvac Tetra for adults and children aged 3 years and over (available in early April)
- Fluarix Tetra for children aged 6 to 35 months (available in mid-April) – please ensure you reserve the Fluarix Tetra vaccine for paediatric patients only.

You can now preorder your influenza vaccines – these orders will be delivered first. Please do not plan clinics until your supplies have arrived. As you aim to vaccinate your staff and patients against influenza before winter starts, the introduction of free zoster vaccination from 1 April 2018 may place pressure on your capacity. In particular, be mindful of your cold chain capacity and vaccine ordering volumes during this time. The Influenza Kit 2018 is now available online at www.influenza.org.nz and will be sent to providers in mid-March.

Higher risk of increased morbidity and mortality

Given the predominance of Influenza A(H3N2) in the Northern Hemisphere this winter, there is a risk that this strain will significantly affect New Zealand again this winter. A(H3N2) has historically
been associated with higher morbidity and mortality, particularly in the elderly. Immunisation offers the best protection and our vaccine this year should be a better match against this H3N2 strain.

New vaccination precaution for some new cancer treatments

Influenza vaccination may be contraindicated or need to be delayed for people receiving the following four new cancer treatments - atezolizumab (Tecentriq®), ipilimumab (Yervoy®), nivolumab (Opdivo®) and pembrolizumab (Keytruda®), known as "immune checkpoint inhibitors". Please refer to the 2018 Influenza Kit or the Immunisation Handbook 2017 2nd edition for more information.

New recommendations for those with egg allergies

Both funded influenza vaccines can be safely administered to people with a history of egg allergy including egg anaphylaxis at general practices, pharmacies or at the workplace. Refer to the Influenza Kit for more information.

Recording influenza vaccinations on the NIR

Please record all influenza vaccinations (both funded and non-funded) given by general practices and pharmacies on the NIR. Additional information about recording information on the NIR can be found in the 2018 Influenza Kit. In 2017, 54 percent of those aged 65 and over were vaccinated against influenza and recorded on the NIR. Rates were lower for Māori, Pacific and Asian people.

2017 Influenza vaccine stock

We are aware that some 2017 Influenza vaccine has been offered to patients this year. Please ensure you return any 2017 influenza vaccine stock to Healthcare Logistics for safe destruction.

Funded zoster (shingles) vaccine

From 1 April 2018, Zostavax will be funded for adults aged 65 years on or after 1 April 2018. From 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2020, adults aged 66 to 80 years inclusive will also be eligible to receive one funded dose of Zostavax under a time limited catch up programme.

Contraindication to zoster vaccination

Zoster vaccine is a live attenuated vaccine. Administration of the zoster vaccine to individuals who are immunosuppressed or immunodeficient may result in disseminated varicella-zoster virus disease, including fatal outcomes. Please refer to the Immunisation Handbook 2nd edition and the Zoster fact sheet for more information.

Resources

A zoster vaccine fact sheet is available from the Ministry's website at www.health.govt.nz/our-work/preventative-health-wellness/immunisation/new-zealand-immunisation-schedule. The new resource "Immunisation for Older People" (HE2540) and updated Immunisation Schedule Card (HE1308) will be available from the HealthEd website at www.healthed.govt.nz. Additional zoster vaccine information will be included with your Flu Kit.

A new information sheet “Prevention of herpes zoster (shingles) through immunisation" will be distributed with the 2018 Influenza Kit. An electronic version is available on The Immunisation Advisory Centre home page www.immune.org.nz.

Education and training

IMAC will be presenting a live webinar on 14 March from 5:30pm to 6:30pm on shingles vaccination and the 2018 influenza season. Registration for the webinar can be completed at www.immune.org.nz/webinar.

Vaccine ordering

Changes are being made to the ProPharma online and fax vaccine order forms at www.fundedvaccines.co.nz. From Monday 19 March, vaccines can be ordered in packs of 10. Please use the online order process as it is less susceptible to error and is faster.

If necessary, to keep pharmaceutical refrigerators within their capacity limits, practices may order their Schedule vaccines more frequently than twice a month during April to June when they are also vaccinating their patients against influenza.
NIR and PMS changes

The NIR, practice management systems (PMS) and Ministry payment systems are being updated to include the funded zoster vaccine. Your PMS vendor will advise you when their software has been updated and what changes they have made. Please make sure that all clinical staff have access and have read the release notes from your PMS provider.

Immunisation benefit claims

Only one claim can be made for administration of immunisation services to the same patient on the same day including administration of influenza and zoster vaccine in same visit. If the vaccines are administered at different visits a claim can be made for each visit.

Immunisation Handbook 2017 2nd edition

The online version of the Immunisation Handbook 2017 has been updated to incorporate the influenza and zoster vaccine changes. The Handbook is now available online at www.health.govt.nz/publication/immunisation-handbook-2017. Please note the 2nd edition is not being printed.

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