

## Community Medicine Newsletter

### Update on New Immunization Programs Effective 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012

**1. Rotarix® vaccine is now available at your local health unit with additional inventory expected in February and March. For your first order, please request only as much vaccine as you need to immunize the 2 month old patients you will see in January and February.**

Rotarix® is a live attenuated **oral** vaccine that protects infants against severe, dehydrating gastroenteritis (fever, vomiting and diarrhea) caused by rotavirus infection. Vaccine is safe and highly effective against preventing all rotavirus infection and serious illness that requires a visit to a physician, emergency room or hospitalization. Vaccine should be administered to children at their 2 and 4 month visits. All infants born on or after 1 November 2011 are eligible for this program. The first dose should be given between 6 and 20 weeks of age and the second dose should be given by 8 months of age. The two doses need to be separated by a minimum of 4 weeks.

Unlike other vaccines, rotavirus vaccines have a maximum acceptable age after which the vaccines should not be given. This requirement is placed in order to minimize confusion between the rare risk of intussusception associated with vaccine (approximately 1-2 cases per 100,000 vaccine recipients) and natural increase in the background rate of intussusception (~34 per 100,000 children) that occurs in infants between 4 – 12 months of age.

As rotavirus is a seasonal infection with illness noted in the winter months, we highly recommend that you vaccinate your eligible infants as soon as possible. Vaccine is available at local health units now with further inventory expected throughout the season. Please place vaccine orders with your local health units. Your office can bill for administration using the rotavirus vaccine specific code, 10029.

**2. Varicella (chickenpox) booster is now publicly funded for children at 4-6 years of age. Children can receive this booster in your office or as part of the school immunization program.**

**3. Hepatitis A vaccine is now available for Aboriginal children and youth (≤ 18 years of age), both on- and off-reserve.**

Hepatitis A vaccine, Vaqta®, can be ordered for eligible infants and should be administered as a two dose schedule at 6 and 18 months of age. Older children and youth also require two doses administered six months apart.

**4. Reminder: Please discontinue the 18 month dose of MMR; it will be provided to children at 4-6 year mark as combined MMR-V vaccine.**

If you require further information, please contact the nurse on call at 604-983-6700.

Sincerely,



Brian A. O'Connor, MD, MHSc

Medical Health Officer

Vancouver Coastal Health, North Shore