



Community Medicine Newsletter

Update about the 2012-2013 Influenza Vaccine Program

Dear Doctor,

Thank you for your support in the roll out of our annual influenza vaccination campaign. The campaign will likely start the week of October 22nd after an official announcement by the Ministry of Health. We will send you details about vaccine distribution closer to the start of the campaign. **Please do not book any immunization clinics until you receive notice about vaccine availability.**

Eligibility: Influenza vaccine is recommended for everybody, but provided free for those at high risk of influenza complications, those in contact with people at high risk, and essential community service providers. Influenza vaccine is also recommended in all stages of pregnancy.

New this year: vaccine is free for all children 6 months to 5 years of age and their contacts.

Health Care Worker Program: Also new this year, all health authority health care workers will be required to be vaccinated for influenza or wear a procedure mask for the influenza season. If your clients identify themselves as health care workers, please immunize and document in the patient chart.

Flu Vaccines: This year's publicly funded vaccines are Vaxigrip[®] (65% of our supply), Flud[®] (33%), Flumist[®] (2%) and limited quantities of Agriflu[®] for people with allergy to thimerosal. Seniors ≥ 65 years of age should be preferentially immunized with Flud[®] until you run out, and then Vaxigrip[®] can be used. Children 2-17 years of age should be preferentially immunized with Flumist[®] (where available) followed by Vaxigrip[®]. Vaxigrip[®] can be used in all ages ≥ 6 months. Agriflu[®] is available to immunizers by special order or clients can be referred to a public health clinic.

Flud[®] Effectiveness Study: The study involving Vancouver Coastal, Fraser Health and Vancouver Island Health continues this year. Interim results from the first year of this study indicate that Flud[®] provided superior protection than usual flu vaccines used in the elderly. The eligibility criteria for Flud[®] have thus been expanded to include all seniors 65 years of age and older.

VCH Flumist[®] (intranasal) Pilot: VCH is running a pilot in public health clinics and select primary care offices. In the pilot setting, eligible children 2-17 years of age will be offered publicly funded Flumist[®]. Ethics-approved surveys will be administered to parents and immunizers. Although supplies are limited and will run out quickly, all physicians (outside the pilot) will be provided with a small quantity to trial in anticipation of wider availability next year. Flumist[®] is licensed for use in eligible patients 2-59 years of age, but would need to be privately purchased by people 18-59 years of age or those 2-17 years old when the free supply runs out.

Vaccine Packing and Storage: Increasing package sizes of vaccines will be an important storage and handling consideration for immunizers this fall. Vaxigrip[®] package size has increased by 20%. Unless you have requested otherwise, approximately 30% of your vaccine order will include Flud[®] for seniors. Flud[®] is packaged in a pre-filled single dose syringe (ten doses in one large box) that is approximately 8x the volume of a Vaxigrip[®] package.

We understand that physicians prefer picking up 100% of their order at the Nat Bailey site. We do not anticipate receiving our complete influenza vaccine stock by October 22nd but will distribute the most we can (likely up to 70% of the order). Your office staff will need to pick up the remainder of the vaccine at the local health unit.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian A. O'Connor".

Brian A. O'Connor, MD, MHSc
Medical Health Officer

Vancouver Coastal Health, North Shore