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Swine Flu (H1N1 09) - a good dress rehearsal

The general practice network has been very involved with swine flu from the time of the first confirmed case in Australia. Now known as H1N1 09, this flu has galvanised the health care sector and put into practice the nation's pandemic plan/s. This flu is relatively mild for those without underlying health issues or pregnant women. However, this should not detract from the fact that it is still influenza and influenza kills many people in our country each year. Over the past few years, seasonal flu has caused around 2500 deaths per year and 15,000 hospitalisations - more deaths than the road toll. We can logically expect more deaths from H1N1 09 as the flu season progresses.

A good summary of the information on this flu can be found at this site;

http://www.ncirs.usyd.edu.au/h1n1_influenza_sheet.htm

As part of the country's response to H1N1 09, the general practice network was asked by the Commonwealth to roll out training in the use of personal protective equipment (PPE), infection control and phone triaging for all general practices and to develop practice specific pandemic plans. This network response has been funded by the Commonwealth and is due for completion by mid July.

The quick and efficient response from the SBOs who organised and facilitated the initial train the trainer sessions and from the network members who have been involved in training and working with practices, has been exceptional and just shows what the network is capable of achieving! **Well done to everyone!!**

The pandemic phase may have been lowered to Protect, but it is still at a level that requires an appropriate response. For the network and country as a whole, this flu has provided an excellent dress rehearsal for any future and possible far more virulent influenza pandemic.

Daily information on the H1N1 09 situation can be found at;

http://www.healthemergency.gov.au/internet/healthemergency/publishing.nsf/Content/health-swine_influenza_index.htm

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Information contained within this newsletter is intended to inform you on immunisation issues with a national perspective. As such, it is possible that some references will require adjustment to be made specifically accurate for service providers in each individual State or Territory jurisdiction. For further clarification, contact your SBO Immunisation Coordinator or jurisdiction Health Department. AGPN acknowledges the financial support of the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

The general practice network's response can be found on the AGPN website at; www.agpn.com.au

Hand washing and cough or sneeze etiquette provide the best first line of defence.

The following are worth watching for funny but with a serious message on current sneeze and cough etiquette:

- o History of The Sleeve (well worth watching – hilarious) <http://www.flu-u.com/cover/video-why-dont-we-do-it-in-our-sleeves>
- o Why don't we do it in our sleeves?? (well worth a look too – watch the above first) <http://www.flu-u.com/cover/video-why-dont-we-do-it-in-our-sleeves>
- o Poster <http://www.flu-u.com/cover/how-do-i-cough-into-my-sleeve>

In the mean time..... Seasonal flu vaccine is again available so remember to have your seasonal flu vaccination and get protected!

GSK Adult Immunisation Grants

This year the GSK Adult Immunisation Grants have been expanded from 2 to 4 categories. That means there are four opportunities to win \$20,000.

The GSK Adult Immunisation Grants program was developed to support adult immunisation in Australia and looks for innovative programs or projects that aim to improve awareness of adult immunisation, increase access to immunisation or improve a key aspect of immunisation management within an organisation or practice.

This year, the four categories include;

1. General Practice,
2. Division of General Practice,
3. Council/Local Authority, Hospital or Community Organisation and
4. Indigenous Health

Information about the grants and this year's application and information can be found at;

www.gsk.com.au/adultimmunisationgrants

The 2007 winners were Mackay General Practice Network and Melbourne Division of General Practice and the 2008 winners were the ACT Division of General Practice and NSW SES. It would be wonderful to have the general practice network well represented again this year so get your applications in!

Closing date for this year's grants is 1 September at 5.30 pm.

Winners will be announced at this year's Forum in Sydney in November.

Apply yourself, for your division or combine with others.

Apply Now! www.gsk.com.au/adultimmunisationgrants

Pertussis is an ongoing issue

Pertussis or whooping cough is a highly contagious disease caused by a bacteria and spread by coughing or sneezing. It affects the air passages and can cause difficulty in breathing and can lead to severe complications requiring hospitalisation and possible death in babies. The case of the 4 week old baby dying in NSW earlier this year has highlighted the need for parents, grandparents and carers or others involved with new babies to be vaccinated to protect those too young to be vaccinated themselves.

So far this year we have seen an increase of up to five times the previous number of cases from January to May. In 2008 there were 14000 notified cases. So far this year there have been more than 13,000 cases already. The best way to counter this epidemic is to immunise and in particular, to immunise adults who are likely to come into contact with young babies or children.

Some jurisdictions have funded vaccines for new parents and grandparents to encourage immunisation. Others are relying on promotion of the importance of this vaccine by groups such as our network. Check for jurisdictional information on your state/territory immunisation sites.

NSW - [NSW immunisation](#)

Qld - [Qld immunisation](#)

NT - [NT immunisation](#)

Victoria - [Vic immunisation](#)

SA - [SA immunisation](#)

ACT - [ACT immunisation](#)

WA - [WA immunisation](#)

Tasmania - [Tas immunisation](#)

The current outbreak fuelled a surge in demand for the licensed dTpa vaccines in Australia resulting in a national shortage in the private market. However, both manufacturers now confirm that they have adequate supplies in the country to satisfy the private market.

Information on Pertussis can be found in the Australian Immunisation Handbook or on this site which gives information on Pertussis for immunisation providers from the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance.

http://www.ncirs.usyd.edu.au/facts/Pertussis%20fact%20sheet_final_0106092.pdf

Updated Fact Sheets on NCIRS website

National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS) has updated some of their fact sheets;

Human papillomavirus vaccines for Australians: information for GPs and other immunisation providers.

Pertussis Vaccine for Australians

These and many others can be found at: http://www.ncirs.usyd.edu.au/facts/f-fact_sheets.html.

NCIRS also publishes an informative newsletter quarterly and the current issue can be found (along with previous ones) at – <http://www.ncirs.usyd.edu.au/newsletters/newsletters.html>

BAN THE FLU with THE GIDGEE HEALING CREW

In April 2009 the clear blue skies and red dust of Mt Isa in north western Queensland provided the setting for the annual influenza and pneumococcal vaccination clinic at Gidgee Healing, the local Aboriginal medical service.

Gidgee Healing is well supported by their local division – North & West Queensland Primary Health Care (NWQPHC) through their Mt Isa branch office. Glenda Jones and Pam Helmrich, both Practice Support Officers with NWQPHC welcomed people as they arrived and took down their details so they could be cross-checked with the clinic's records.

General Practice Queensland was able to provide some funding to support this activity as well as two extra willing workers and supporters in Thea Watson, Program Officer and Jane Sanders, Immunisation Program Coordinator.

The DJs from the local Aboriginal radio station, MOB FM kept up a running commentary and provided music which not only created a festive atmosphere but helped distract people from any nervous anxiety!

With MOB FM sending out the message, "Come along to Gidgee Healing and see the Flu Crew to receive your free flu vaccination", people continued to arrive throughout the day. They arrived on foot, by car or in the "Flu Crew" minibus which helped transport people to and from the clinic. Food and drink were provided with many people spending time catching up with friends and family.

Queensland Health was on hand to help with checking vaccination histories through a telephone link to VIVAS (Qld Health's immunisation database). This was great opportunity to check patient details with VIVAS and make sure everyone was vaccinated appropriately.

Once the patient had their details and history checked they lined up at the 'vaccination marquee' to see the GP who conducted a pre-vaccination checklist.



Next step was to see one of the team of four nurses for their vaccination.

It is due to the time and effort put in by the Flu Crew at Gidgee Healing that over



Pam (right) and Glenda (left) at the welcome table



Helen from the Flu Crew updating patient details

120 Aboriginal people were vaccinated on the day!

Special mention to Leeona West, Karen West & Dallas Young from Gidgee Healing for making us feel welcome and part of the Crew.



Clinic manager & RN Leeona West 'providing' flu protection

Acknowledgement and thanks to all the other supporters of Gidgee Healing's influenza and pneumococcal clinic – Qld Health – Tropical Population Health Unit in Townsville, MOB FM, NWQPHC and the local community in Mt Isa.

Identification of indigenous patients

Identifying indigenous patients is often difficult for practice staff and the resources recently updated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics may help to improve the identification and recording of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients within primary health care settings. Three pamphlets have been updated:

- A pamphlet for general practitioners. It is focused on why general practitioners should identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients.
- A pamphlet for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. It is focused on why people are asked questions about their cultural identification.
- A poster for waiting rooms. The target audience is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and is focused on why cultural identification is asked within the practice.

These resources may be useful for Divisions to promote identification of Aboriginal patients with mainstream practices.

To order resources please contact:

National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics (NCATSIS)

Australian Bureau of Statistics

Client Services Team - 1800 633 216 (freecall)

E: indigenous.statistics@abs.gov.au W: www.abs.gov.au

Immunisation showcased in the north



Photo: Helen Tondut, the immunisation program manager from Kimberly Division of General Practice with Shelly Howe, the immunisation program officer for WA General Practice Network

The North West Expo is an event which brings together all the people of the North West from Darwin to Karratha. It showcases business, industry, employment, education, arts, tourism, recreation, social and cultural opportunities in, and for, this vast, remote and growing region.

The Kimberly Division of General Practice provided information and the opportunity for discussion on nutrition, podiatry, mental health, medication management and immunisation.

This was a timely opportunity to promote the WA paediatric influenza program, routine seasonal influenza vaccination and the importance of routine childhood vaccination.

Preventing Cervical Cancer presentations online

The Victorian Cytology Service Inc (VCS), in association with the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance of Vaccine Preventable Diseases (NCIRS), was proud to be the organiser of **Preventing Cervical Cancer 2009: Integrating screening and vaccination (PCC2009)** held in Melbourne from March 18-20th 2009.

The conference brought together international and Australian experts in cervical screening, vaccination and cancer epidemiology. These speakers included Simon Dobson, Ian Frazer, Eduardo Franco, Chris Meijer, and Ron Jones. They stimulated some healthy debate over the course of the two days and encouraged the delegates to explore current and future directions in the prevention of cervical cancer.

Topics included HPV vaccination science and policy, vaccine safety, HPV testing in screening, new models of screening in the vaccination era, preventing cervical cancer in Indigenous women, and program monitoring.

The proceedings of the conference are available for viewing at: www.pcc2009.org.au

or at the Victorian Cytology Service website at: www.vcs.org.au

Immunisation promotion in WA

The Pilbara Health Network staff saw no boundaries when it came to promoting immunisation at the recent Karratha 'Teddy Bear's Picnic'. Children and parents were thrilled to see Pocahontas and Bat Girl, which provided an excellent opportunity to discuss immunisation issues.



Carol Valdez, the Pilbara Division Immunisation Program Officer on the right with Batgirl

A Reminder to GPs Send your HPV data to the HPV register!

General Practitioners are being encouraged to send all their HPV data to the register as soon as possible. The catch up program which involves general practice is due to finish on 31 December 2009 and all those women who have not turned 27 will have needed to have their first shot before 30 June to qualify for the funded program.

GPs who have already registered and have been sending in their data should have received payments from Medicare Australia. Those who have not registered can do so online at www.hpvregister.org.au

More than 74% of GPs have registered with the HPV Register and many have sent in their data. As part of the legislation, a \$6 service fee is paid to the GP for sending in the notifications. So far more than \$5 Million has been paid out to GPs.

The HPV Register is in the process of sending patients their completion or history letters. These will be sent out in a staggered process by jurisdiction.

The Register can be contacted on 1800 478 734 (1800 HPV REG) from 8am -6pm Monday – Friday and 9am – 2pm Saturdays across Australia.

Information on how to extract the data from medical software can be found on the AGPN website at:

http://www.agpn.com.au/site/index.cfm?display=1813&PageMode=indiv&page_id=32968&leca=63

When submitting data to the HPV Register, remember that hand writing must be legible and the GP provider number clear!

General practice should be receiving 'log on' details to be able to check their patient's history as the register becomes interactive. Here are some tips for using the interactive search facility of the register:

- Search by full Medicare number (including pt reference number) will be the easiest. Any records for which GPs have been paid for notifying the register will have Medicare Numbers, so this is the best field to use for searching.
- If entering names, then remember that the first data field on the Search form is the given name, not the surname.
- The system will only return a single record, so if the search terms would yield more than one record then you will be prompted (by an error message) to include additional criteria – e.g. a suburb may help distinguish between matching names and dates of birth

AGPN Forum 4 - 7 November 2009, Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre

See the website for details:

<http://www.gpnetworkforum.com.au/site/index.cfm>