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HSS(MD) 11/00

To: All General Practitioners
All Community Pharmacists
Directors of Public Health
Medical Directors of HSS Trusts for onward distribution to all consultants
Consultants in Communicable Disease Control in each H&SSB
Directors of Nursing of H&SSB
Directors of Pharmaceutical Services of H&SSB and CSA
Nursing Directors of HSS Trusts
Directors of Pharmaceutical Services of HSS Trusts
Regional Epidemiologist, CDSC

23 May 2000

Dear Colleague

INFLUENZA IMMUNISATION PROGRAMME FOR WINTER 2000/2001

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of an extended policy being launched on 23 May 2000 for this year's influenza immunisation programme. The main points are listed here, and more detailed information will follow in a future joint professional letter.

UK Health Ministers have agreed a recommendation from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) that immunisation policy should be extended to include all people aged 65 years and over, in addition to people with underlying 'high risk' conditions whatever their age, and people in long-stay residential care. Further details may be found in 'Immunisation Against Infectious Disease' (The Green Book) 1996 edition, Chapter 20.

This decision follows an appraisal showing that immunising the otherwise fit 65-74 year age group offers benefits in life expectancy as well as reductions in complications and hospital admissions. The benefits of influenza immunisation in the other risk groups are well established.

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety has convened a multidisciplinary working group to improve uptake of influenza immunisation in all target groups. For the first time, a regional and Health and Social Services Board target of 65% is being set for uptake of 'flu immunisations among people aged 65 years and over. The regional multidisciplinary working group will work with the Health and Social Services Boards to help primary care professionals achieve this target. There will be discussions at national level with the General Practitioners' Committee over remuneration for this new policy. This Department will keep in close touch with these developments. Further information will be sent in due course.



Health and Social Services Boards should:

- Identify a single co-ordinator with overall responsibility for influenza immunisation;
- Work with GPs to ensure that all people aged 65 years and over are contacted and offered 'flu vaccine. The target uptake of 65% applies to this group only.
- Ensure that arrangements are made to monitor uptake of vaccine in each practice and in the Health and Social Services Board overall to allow a regional evaluation of immunisation uptake. Further information will be available on the best methods of recording and monitoring of uptake of vaccine.
- Disseminate examples of 'good practice' to encourage maximum uptake in all GP practices.
- Offer help to practices where the minimum 65% uptake may prove difficult to reach, and to consider setting up additional arrangements to deliver the immunisations.

GPs are asked to:

- Review as a matter of urgency their "at risk" population as well as the additional population of people aged 65-74 years of age and estimate the amount of vaccine they require.

Immunisation of HPSS Staff

In addition, the Minister has agreed, in step with the rest of the UK, that Health and Social Services Boards and Trusts should offer 'flu vaccine to key staff involved in the delivery of care and/or support to patients. The Department will be issuing further guidance on this once the details of a scheme have been worked out.

Vaccine manufacturers supplying the UK market

Manufacturer	Name of Product	Vaccine Type
Aventis Pasteur MSD	Inactivated influenza vaccine (Split virion) BP	Split virion
Celltech Medeva	Fluvirin	Surface antigen
SmithKline Beecham	Fluarix	Split virion
Solvay	Influvac	Surface antigen
Wyeth	Begrivac	Split virion

Further information may be obtained from:

Dr Elizabeth Mitchell (Medical)

Tel: 02890 520716

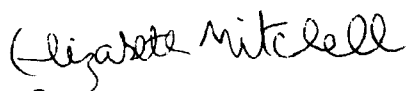
Dr Vanessa Chambers (Pharmaceutical)

Tel: 02890 523279

Mrs Gladys Smyth (Nursing)

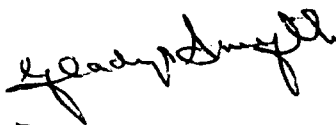
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Yours sincerely



RP

HENRIETTA CAMPBELL (DR)
Chief Medical Officer



RP

JUDITH HILL (MISS)
Chief Nursing Officer



RP

NORMAN MORROW (DR)
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer

Cc: Chief Executives of HSS Boards and Trusts
GP Medical Advisers
Prescribing Advisers of HSSBs
Regional Drug and Poisons Information Service
Pharmaceutical Contractors Committee
General Practitioners Committee, Northern Ireland