



ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON DANGEROUS PATHOGENS

Novel A/H1N1 human influenza – worker protection

Issue

Following the arrival of novel A/H1N1 human influenza in the UK, advice on PPE, including facemasks and respirators, has been issued to healthcare workers, and policy on vaccination has been formulated. Members' attention is drawn to the advice provided to date and their views are sought.

PPE

HPA, in collaboration with DH and HSE, has produced guidance on the use of PPE, including face masks, for healthcare workers. The latest version of this advice (v.1.1), published on 15th May 2009, is included as Annex 1 of this paper. This guidance is published on the HPA's website.

Action: Members are asked whether they endorse the advice on use of respiratory protection as outlined in Annex 1.

HPA has also produced separate interim guidance on extending the lifespan of facemasks and respirators (Annex 2). DH has subsequently sent out further guidance, produced in collaboration with HSE, to influenza leads nationally to clarify the use of face masks and FFP3 respirators currently in their stockpiles (Annex 3).

Action: This is for information, but comments from ACDP members are welcome.

Vaccination

Healthcare workers

Healthcare workers are currently offered seasonal influenza vaccination each year.

The UK Government has signed agreements with GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) and Baxter to secure supplies of up to 90 million doses of pre-pandemic H1N1 vaccine. These agreements will provide enough vaccine to protect the most vulnerable groups in the UK population before a pandemic is likely to begin. Vaccination will be delivered at PCT level through GP surgeries or mass vaccination centres, following guidance on mass vaccination strategy for PCTs published in December 2008 by DH. The currently identified groups for pandemic influenza vaccination include frontline health and social care workers. However, the priority groups will be reviewed in light of emerging evidence on the virulence and severity of the new virus in different groups.

Poultry workers

In 2005 and 2006, ACDP agreed to offer seasonal influenza vaccine to poultry workers as a public health measure to prevent the risk of avian and human influenza virus re-assortment, and the potential emergence of a new influenza strain as a result (see Annexes 4 and 5 of this paper). Vaccination with seasonal influenza has been offered to poultry workers each season since then. The 2008/2009 seasonal influenza programme for poultry workers has just been completed, and a new programme for 2009/2010 will commence in the autumn.

There are currently no plans to offer pre-pandemic H1N1 vaccine to poultry workers.

Action: ACDP are asked to give their views on whether or not there is any need to offer pre-pandemic H1N1 vaccine to poultry workers, in addition to seasonal influenza vaccine.

Pig workers

In 2005 and 2006, the ACDP considered whether there was a need to routinely vaccinate pig workers against seasonal influenza as a public health measure. It was accepted that there was a theoretical risk of reassortment of influenza viruses within pigs, and the subsequent transmission of a new influenza strain to humans from pigs. However, on the balance of evidence that suggested that pigs played no major role in the transmission of influenza to humans, it was agreed by both ACDP and the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) that seasonal influenza vaccine would not be routinely offered to pig workers.

Following the recent emergence of novel A/H1N1 human influenza, Members are invited to consider whether pig workers should now be routinely offered vaccination for seasonal influenza.

Action: ACDP members are asked for their views on seasonal influenza vaccination for pig workers.

There are currently no plans to offer pre-pandemic H1N1 vaccine to pig workers.

Action: ACDP are asked for their views on whether or not there is any need to offer pre-pandemic H1N1 vaccine to pig workers.

Secretariat

June 2009