

From the Chief Medical Officer

Dr Michael McBride

HSS(MD) 25/2019



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Mánnystrie O Poustie

www.health-ni.gov.uk

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FOR ACTION

Chief Executives, Public Health Agency/Health and Social
Care Board/HSC Trusts/NIAS
GP Medical Advisers, Health and Social Care Board
All General Practitioners
GP Locums (*for onward distribution to practice staff*)

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Our Ref: HSS(MD)25/2019
Date: 23 October 2019

Dear Colleague

EXPECTED DELAY TO SOME BATCHES OF FLUENZ TETRA FLU VACCINE

Action Required

Chief Executives must ensure this information is drawn to the attention of all staff involved in the seasonal flu vaccination programme, especially school health teams.

The HSCB must ensure this information is cascaded to all General Practitioners and practice managers for onward distribution to all staff involved in the seasonal flu vaccination programme.

1. We have recently been informed by colleagues in Public Health England, who procure the childhood vaccine on our behalf for the whole of the UK, that a number of the batches of the JCVI recommended Live Attenuated Intranasal Vaccine (LAIV) will be delayed. The position is fluid but it is currently anticipated that the delay is likely between 2 and 4 weeks.
2. We understand that 5 of the 7 batches due for delivery to the UK in November, have failed their standard quality assurance testing procedure by the manufacturer Astra Zeneca and as such there will be reduced stock of the vaccine available during November and potentially early December.
3. Whilst this delay is very regrettable, we have discussed the situation with colleagues in the Public Health Agency (PHA), HSCB and the regional pharmaceutical procurement service (RphPS) to consider how best to prioritise the stocks available to us in Northern Ireland.

4. We would therefore ask GPs to ensure they prioritise all children at clinical risk, of any age, and the 2 to 4 year old pre-school children as we know these are at greatest risk from the flu.
5. Given the limited supply of vaccine available I would stress that GPs and Practice Managers should only order enough vaccine to meet their expected weekly needs and only the quantity that they have sufficient refrigerated capacity to store. It is essential that spare capacity be retained centrally to ensure the vaccine can be used effectively.
6. Whilst it is expected that all vaccine programmes have some degree of vaccine wastage, it is important that all practices adhere to regional PHA/HSCB guidelines on vaccine handling and storage in primary care to keep wastage to a minimum. This year, with limited stock this more is more vital than ever. PHA/HSCB Guidelines can be found on the intranet:
7. I fully recognise this will present a logistical challenge to school health teams who will have to re-programme vaccination activity planned in primary schools, but it is important that we ensure the stocks available to us are targeted at those most in need. The PHA will work with Trust School Health Teams to ensure that any potential disruption to primary school children is kept to a minimum.
8. While this issue is not of our making and is impacting on all areas of the UK equally, you should be aware that I understand colleagues in England, Scotland and Wales are taking a similar approach by prioritising those at greatest risk.
9. I understand from the current projections that batches due to be received from 8 November to 22 November will be impacted although I am expecting information from colleagues in Public Health England to provide us with firmer projections in the next few days. In the meantime, I would be grateful if you prioritise your available stock as outlined above.

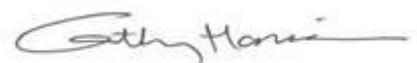
Yours sincerely



Dr Michael McBride
Chief Medical Officer



Professor Charlotte McArdle
Chief Nursing Officer



Mrs Cathy Harrison
Acting Chief Pharmaceutical
Officer

This letter is available on the DoH website at
www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/professional-medical-and-environmental-health-advice/hssmd-letters-and-urgent-communications

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