



# The Immune Response

December 2002

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Vaccines

Please copy and distribute to all immunisation providers in your practice or health centre. Thank you.

## Meningococcal C vax program extended

One million more children aged over 12 months to five years will receive free meningococcal C vaccine from early next year as part of the Federal Government's \$300 million program. Also, adolescents aged 15 to 19 years will also be vaccinated next year.

The TGA recently approved two new suppliers of the meningococcal C vaccine, taking the number of companies supplying the vaccine to three. This has helped to relieve the vaccine shortage experienced earlier this year, and make more stocks available for the expansion of the program.

In the first year of the program, children who are one to five years of age will be vaccinated by their GP, according to Health Minister, Kay Patterson. Adolescents at school aged 15 and over will also receive the free vaccine. Children aged six to 14 years will be vaccinated at school during 2003-04 and 2004-05.

The meningococcal C program is the most expensive vaccination program in Australia and will provide free vaccine to nearly six million children and adolescents over the next four years. Ongoing funding will be provided for routine vaccination of all children

turning 12 months.

Expenditure on vaccines will more than double this financial year, from \$85 million to \$187 million, as a result of the meningococcal C vaccination program.

As the vaccine only protects against type-C disease, community vigilance remains important.

There has been no official word through the divisions as to how the program is to be delivered in our area but it will probably be through general practices rather than the schools as stated in the minister's media release. We will keep you informed.

## BRIEFS

### Conscientious objector rates and divisions' rankings

Currently the Tweed division's immunisation rate is 86.6% with a ranking of 85 out of 123 divisions nationally. However, its conscientious objector rate is 3.01%, which gives an adjusted percentage of 89.6 and moves its ranking right up to 55/123.

The Northern Rivers has the highest number of conscientious objectors nationally. It ranks at 115/123 at 81%, but with a conscientious objector rate of 4.52% the adjusted percentage is 85.5 and the new ranking is 99/123 nationally.

So what is happening with the 14.5% of children in the Northern Rivers division area who are not fully immunised and are not recorded as conscientious objectors? NRDGP practices participating in GPII that have a rate above 70% but below 90% will receive a letter from the division soon detailing their situation in regards to increasing rates to above 90% and then qualifying to receive the incentive payment.

### Changes to the GPII scheme

The GPII, which received a one year extension last year, has again been extended - this time until 30 June 2004. What will happen after this is not known but while the payments are available, we encourage all accredited, or soon to be accredited, practices to take advantage of the payment. As a result of

this extension, the division's funding for its immunisation project has also been extended to the end of June 2004.

The planned increase for the eligibility to receive the outcomes payment from 85% to 90% has been postponed from the end of December to the end of June 03. This means that you will be given a little more time, but as the payment is retrospective, you will need to have your practice percentage above 90% before the end of February. Practices participating in GPII can ring their division to find out what their practices percentage is. This is sent to the practices quarterly from ACIR.

From 1 July 03, children receiving catch-up schedules will be recognised as immunised. This should help practice percentages immensely.

### Q fever accredited GPs wanted

Q fever accredited GPs are needed to run Q fever clinics in Lismore and Murwillumbah. This is in response to phase 2 of the Q fever roll out, which now includes dairy farmers and unpaid farm workers.

The clinics will be held on Saturdays at the end of February and early March. Those interested are asked to contact Gae McDonald at the Northern Rivers division for details. More information will be avail-

able soon. A patient information leaflet is available from the division. It can also be downloaded from the resources section of the division's website on [www.nrdgp.org.au](http://www.nrdgp.org.au).

### Total recall GALA day

Please keep February 8 free for the division's annual Gala day. The many interesting topics and workshops will include the launch of [www.vaccination.org.au](http://www.vaccination.org.au) (look out for 'Spike' our echidna mascot who will appear on the site soon). A workshop on the pitfalls of data cleaning will be included on the day. Besides learning new skills, the results of Jenny's data cleaning in the area will be made known. The results may surprise you.

### Immunisation schedule changes

The change doesn't seem to be starting until mid 2003. The division is arranging an event explaining the changes, the new handbook, new vaccines, catch up schedules, etc. later in the year. A date will be publicised soon.

### Receive The Immune Response by email

If you would like to receive *The Immune Response* by email, please email your address to [gmcDonald@nrdgp.org.au](mailto:gmcDonald@nrdgp.org.au).



A merry and peaceful Christmas  
and a Happy New Year  
to you and your family!