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MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release



Urgent update for GPs regarding seasonal influenza program for children

Due to a spike in the numbers of young children in Western Australia experiencing fever and convulsions following seasonal flu vaccinations, Australia's Chief Medical Officer, Professor Jim Bishop, is advising all GPs and immunisation providers to stop giving seasonal flu vaccine to children five years and under until a cause is established. Professor Bishop confirmed that this is a precautionary measure while the matter is being urgently investigated by health experts and the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). Professor Bishop's media statement is available on the college's website at www.racgp.org.au.

Professor Bishop confirmed that people over five years of age can continue to be vaccinated against seasonal influenza as per usual.

The Australian Immunisation Handbook 9th edition details a comprehensive pre-vaccination health screening, which is necessary to assess a person's medical fitness for vaccination.

Under normal circumstances, it is vital that healthcare professionals take any available opportunity to vaccinate children and adults. However, until this issue is clarified, the RACGP supports the recommendation of the Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer to suspend the seasonal flu vaccine to children five years and under until TGA has completed its investigation.

Useful links for GPs:

Information from the Department of Health and Ageing:

- www.healthemergency.gov.au

The Australian Immunisation Handbook 9th edition

- www.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/Content/Handbook-influenza

Information from the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance on vaccine safety:

- Factsheets for immunisation providers on the influenza vaccine:
www.ncirs.usyd.edu.au/immunisation/fact-sheets/influenza-fact-sheet.pdf
- Addressing patient/parent concerns about immunisation
www.ncirs.usyd.edu.au/immunisation/fact-sheets/parent-resources-fact-sheet.pdf

Information from the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH):

- Contraindications to immunisation -
www.rch.org.au/genmed/clinical.cfm?doc_id=4519

- Febrile Convulsion - www.rch.org.au/clinicalguide/cpg.cfm?doc_id=5132
- Febrile Child under 3 Yr - www.rch.org.au/clinicalguide/cpg.cfm?doc_id=5181

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About the RACGP

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) sets and maintains the standards for quality clinical practice, education and training, and research in Australian general practice, and represents Australia's urban and rural general practitioners. Visit www.racgp.org.au.