

Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI)
63rd meeting
15 and 16 June 2017

ATAGI BULLETIN

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) 63rd face-to-face meeting was held on 15 and 16 June 2017 in Canberra.

Pneumococcal disease

- ATAGI continued to review the evidence on the optimal pneumococcal vaccination schedule in young children. The evidence supports a booster dose in the second year of life, and ATAGI considered the appropriateness of alternative schedules currently used in other countries (i.e. a 2+1 schedule or a 3+1 schedule) in the Australian context.
- ATAGI considered the evidence and discussed revisions to the list of risk factors for groups at the highest risk of invasive pneumococcal disease (IPD). ATAGI also considered the evidence for vaccinating individuals who have previously had IPD, as well as for those with other conditions that result in a higher risk of IPD.
- The updated pneumococcal chapter of the *Australian Immunisation Handbook* is expected to be released for public consultation in November 2017 and will make recommendations to address emerging pneumococcal epidemiology in Australia.

Meningococcal disease

- ATAGI endorsed the terms of reference for the reconvened Meningococcal Working Party and discussed the recent epidemiology of meningococcal disease, particularly that caused by serogroup W.
- There are three registered meningococcal quadrivalent conjugate vaccines in Australia and all are registered for young children internationally. ATAGI is reviewing the efficacy and safety of the vaccines, and their potential uses in Australia.
- The meningococcal chapter of the *Australian Immunisation Handbook* will be updated in 2018 to recommend vaccination options to address the current epidemiology of meningococcal disease in Australia.

Influenza

- Influenza is a serious disease in pregnant women and infants. ATAGI discussed the importance of influenza vaccination during pregnancy for protection of the mother and the baby.
- Members also discussed the optimal timing for vaccination against seasonal influenza during pregnancy. ATAGI agreed that the influenza vaccine should be given at any time during pregnancy when the vaccine is available, and that influenza vaccination during pregnancy should not be delayed. ATAGI stressed that the seasonal inactivated influenza vaccine can be safely co-administered with a pertussis-containing vaccine during pregnancy.

Australian Immunisation Handbook

- Members noted that there have been seven online updates to the Handbook since the 10th edition was published in 2014. ATAGI emphasised that the hard copy Handbook is no longer up to date, and immunisation providers should consult the online version.
- The Department of Health informed members that it is continuing to assess the potential for digitisation of the Handbook and creating a user-friendly interactive document.
- ATAGI discussed the need to consult with other specialist groups on some issues relating to vaccination to provide additional expert input and ensure alignment of guidelines. This approach has been successful in the update to the zoster chapter of the Handbook, due for release in August 2017.
- ATAGI also noted that public consultation for several chapters for the 2018 annual update will be undertaken in November–December 2017.

Industry Day 2017

- The ATAGI Industry Day 2017 was held on Wednesday 14 June 2017 in Canberra. Industry representatives were invited to present to ATAGI on new and emerging vaccines, new technologies for assessing immunity, research updates on registered vaccines, improvements in delivery technologies, and timelines for vaccine submissions to the PBAC. ATAGI thanked the participating companies for their contributions.

ATAGI processes and business

- The Department and ATAGI continued to review and discuss ATAGI's conflict of interest policies and determinations.
- ATAGI is continuing to undertake an evaluation using the National Immunization Technical Advisory Group (NITAG) evaluation tool. This as an ongoing quality improvement tool and ATAGI is updating the standard operating procedures as required.

Other issues in vaccines and immunisation

- ATAGI formed a working group to provide advice to the Department on due and overdue rules for each vaccine schedule point in the Australian Immunisation Register.
- ATAGI also agreed to re-establish the Varicella–Zoster Working Party and another smaller time limited group to review the epidemiology of *Haemophilus influenzae* type b in Australia.
- Members noted the current global shortages of vaccines for hepatitis B, BCG and meningococcal B in the private market, and discussed the importance of vaccine companies continuing to report upcoming shortages to the Therapeutic Goods Administration.
- ATAGI discussed the results of the recent Australian Child Health Polls on immunisation.

Summary of decisions of key immunisation technical advisory groups of interest

- Members noted the report from the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS) summarising recent deliberations and recommendations from the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization of the World Health Organization, and NITAGs of the USA, UK, Canada and New Zealand.

Notes and resources

- ATAGI's membership, terms of reference and conflict of interest information are available on the [Immunise Australia website](#) (refer to 'Immunisation Advisory Bodies').
- The *Australian Immunisation Handbook* is available on the [Immunise Australia website](#).
- The summary of decisions of key immunisation technical advisory groups of interest report will be available on the [NCIRS website](#).
- Information on NITAGs worldwide is available on the [NITAG Resource Centre website](#).
- Next ATAGI meeting: Thursday 12 October to Friday 13 October 2017. The meeting agenda will be published on the Immunise Australia website shortly before the meeting.