

Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI)
54th meeting
24–25 June 2014

ATAGI BULLETIN

- The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) 54th face-to-face meeting was held on 24 and 25 June 2014 in Canberra.
- ATAGI considered emerging evidence on the success of the pertussis vaccination program during pregnancy as an outbreak control measure in the United Kingdom. ATAGI will evaluate the evidence when it is published and review its current recommendations relating to maternal pertussis immunisation during pregnancy.
- ATAGI endorsed its advice to the Department of Health on the inclusion of Down syndrome, obesity and chronic liver disease as at-risk conditions eligible for influenza vaccination on the National Immunisation Program (NIP).
- Members noted that an application to include annual seasonal influenza vaccination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged six months to 59 months on the NIP is under consideration by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC).
- Members noted that the PBAC, at its March 2014 meeting, deferred a recommendation to list Zostavax[®] (herpes zoster vaccine, bioCSL) on the NIP for 60 year olds with a catch-up cohort of 61-79 year olds.
- Members discussed and endorsed ATAGI's postsubmission advice to the PBAC regarding listing of Bexsero[®] (meningococcal B vaccine, Novartis) on the NIP for prevention of meningococcal B disease in infants and adolescents. The PBAC will consider this resubmission at its July 2014 meeting.
- Members noted that the Hepatitis B Working Party's initial focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is now complete, and the Department is considering ATAGI's recommendations. The Working Party will continue its work on issues relating to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including migrant groups and refugees from high-endemicity countries.
- ATAGI reviewed and endorsed its interim policy advice to the Department on immunisation during an influenza pandemic.
- The Communicable Diseases Network Australia (CDNA) representative presented ATAGI with a summary of vaccine-preventable disease notifications from 1 January to 30 April 2014. ATAGI provided advice to the CDNA on the development of the Series of National Guidelines (SoNGs) regarding the use of vaccines in public health management for hepatitis B, and noted the advice on meningococcal disease which was endorsed out-of-session prior to this meeting.
- ATAGI reviewed potential updates to the *Australian Immunisation Handbook*, 10th edition for inclusion in the 2015 annual online update.
- ATAGI was pleased to note that, on 20 March 2014, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that Australia had achieved measles elimination. As Australia is still receiving a significant number of measles notifications, mainly as a result of importation from overseas, maintenance of high vaccination rates is essential.

- The Department of Health provided a summary of the key issues arising from the 23rd meeting of the Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation and Vaccine-Preventable Diseases in the Western Pacific Region, held in Manila, Philippines, on 17-20 June 2014. Many countries are making substantial progress towards controlling, and where possible eliminating, a range of vaccine-preventable diseases, including measles, hepatitis B, maternal and neonatal tetanus and rubella and the region is likely to meet many of its targets in these areas.
- ATAGI noted that WHO has issued temporary recommendations under the International Health Regulations (2005) to reduce the international spread of wild poliovirus. These temporary recommendations will affect Australians who travel for longer than four weeks to countries that have active transmission of polio.
- Members discussed the outcomes and issues arising for follow-up from the ATAGI 2014 Industry Day, held on 23 June 2014, and prepared feedback for sponsors on their presentations.
- The 55th meeting of ATAGI will be held on 16 and 17 October 2014 in Canberra.

Notes

ATAGI Membership

Following an expression of interest process for membership on the ATAGI to fill a number of position terms expiring on 30 June 2014, the Hon Peter Dutton, Minister for Health, has appointed a number of new members to ATAGI and made a change to the chair position:

- Professor Ross Andrews will assume the Chair of ATAGI from 1 July for four years;
- Three new members have been appointed to ATAGI for a four year term:
 - Dr Nigel Crawford, Consultant Paediatrician and Deputy Director Surveillance of adverse events following vaccination in the community (SAEFVIC);
 - Professor David Durrheim, Director Health Protection-Population Health, Hunter New England Health and Conjoint Professor of Public Health Medicine, University of Newcastle; and
 - Associate Professor Helen Marshall, Senior Medical Practitioner and Medical Director, Vaccinology and Immunology Research Trials Unit, Women’s and Children’s Hospital and Robinson Research Institute and School of Paediatrics and Reproductive Health, University of Adelaide;
- The existing member in common of ATAGI and PBAC Professor David Isaacs has been appointed for a further four year term.

The Department would like to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing Chair Professor Terry Nolan AO, and members Dr Nicole Gilroy, Dr Joanne Molloy and Associate Professor Peter Richmond for the time and effort they have contributed to ATAGI over the years. Their significant contribution to the National Immunisation Program and public health outcomes in Australia cannot be underestimated.

The need to continually refresh the membership of ATAGI has been recognised since 2005, when the new framework for ATAGI was established and the requirement for a vaccine to undergo a cost-effectiveness assessment by the PBAC prior to its recommendation for listing on the National Immunisation Program.

- ATAGI’s membership and terms of reference are available on the Immunise Australia website at www.immunise.health.gov.au (see ‘Immunisation Advisory Bodies’).
- The *Australian Immunisation Handbook* is available on the Immunise Australia website at www.immunise.health.gov.au (see ‘*Australian Immunisation Handbook 10th Edition 2013*’).