

Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI)

44th Meeting

24 & 25 February 2011

ATAGI BULLETIN

- The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) 44th face-to-face meeting was held on 24 and 25 February 2011 in Canberra.
- ATAGI noted progress on the development of the National Immunisation Strategy. It was anticipated that the strategy would be finalised in mid-2011 and be considered by the Australian Health Ministers' Conference.
- ATAGI considered its arrangements for receiving reports about adverse events following vaccination. It was agreed that the 6-monthly adverse event reports from the Therapeutic Goods Administration and the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance be considered at ATAGI's February and October meetings.
- ATAGI continued to build on international relationships, including:
 - establishing stronger links with New Zealand and ATAGI equivalents in the Western Pacific region; and
 - with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (England) on meningococcal vaccine.
- ATAGI members reviewed a substantial body of work on vaccination against pertussis including evidence on the duration of effectiveness of acellular pertussis vaccines, the interval between the primary childhood and booster adolescent doses and the potential impact of the vaccination of close contacts of newborn infants (the "cocoon" strategy) to reduce severe infant morbidity.
- On the basis of the evidence provided, and to address the ongoing pertussis epidemic in Australia, the ATAGI endorsed the Pertussis Working Party's recommendations to:
 - bring forward the first dose of pertussis-containing vaccine from 8 weeks to 6 weeks; and
 - schedule the fifth dose at 11 to 13 years.
- ATAGI noted the Working Party's advice that there was evidence of waning immunity following the first 3 doses of pertussis-containing vaccine at 2,4 and 6 months from Australian vaccine effectiveness studies, and evidence that children in the toddler age group were contributing to transmission of pertussis to infants too young to be protected by pertussis vaccination. Reintroduction of an additional dose of pertussis-containing vaccine at 18 months was identified as an important option to address these issues.
- Further modelling to assess the likely impact on direct morbidity from pertussis and transmission to young infants of a fourth dose of pertussis vaccine at 18 months compared to other options and implications for later doses is recommended.

- ATAGI members provided clinical advice on the administration of seasonal trivalent influenza vaccines for 2011. This has been published on the Immunise Australia website at: www.immunise.health.gov.au
- ATAGI also made a recommendation that influenza vaccination for children under 5 years of age should be considered for inclusion on the NIP.
- ATAGI is reviewing the current schedule regarding revaccination of adults aged 65 years and over who have already received a dose of 23vPPV under the national pneumococcal vaccination program for older Australians. Further advice will be sought from its Pneumococcal Working Party.
- ATAGI members provided advice on the administration of the rotavirus vaccine and the risk of intussusception. It recommended that Rotarix[®] and Rotateq[®] continue to be used in Australia. Further information is available at: www.immunise.health.gov.au
- ATAGI welcomed the announcement by the Hon Nicola Roxon MP, Minister for Health and Ageing on 25 February 2011, that two vaccines Prevenar 13[®] a 13-valent pneumococcal vaccine, and Menitorix[®] a combination *Haemophilus influenzae* type B (Hib) and *Neisseria meningitidis* group C (meningococcal C) vaccine will be added to the National Immunisation Program and be provided free of charge to eligible children.
 - Prevenar 13[®] will be available as a three-dose course for children around 2, 4 and 6 months of age.
 - Menitorix[®] will be available as a single dose for children aged 12 months of age.
- ATAGI provided pre and post submission advice to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) on vaccines that could potentially be listed under the National Immunisation Program.
- ATAGI provided advice to the PBAC on the use of Gardasil[®] in adolescent males and will continue to complete work detailed by the Terms of Reference for the Working Party.
- ATAGI endorsed the Compromised Vaccines Guidelines which provide advice on actions to take in the event of a vaccine being compromised. The Guidelines were specifically developed to assist jurisdictional immunisation coordinators in providing best practice advice following the administration of compromised vaccine(s) and to ensure that practices are nationally consistent.
- ATAGI has formed a Working Party to consider issues relating to post-exposure prophylaxis rabies and Australian bat lyssavirus.
- ATAGI is currently developing the 10th Edition of the ‘Australian Immunisation Handbook’.
- The next ATAGI meeting is scheduled for 9 & 10 June 2011 in Canberra.
- ATAGI will be holding the next Industry Day with pharmaceutical companies on Wednesday 12 October 2011 in Canberra.