

**Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI)  
65th meeting  
15 and 16 February 2018**

**ATAGI BULLETIN**

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) 65th face-to-face meeting was held on 15 and 16 February 2018 in Canberra.

**Meningococcal disease**

- ATAGI reviewed recent epidemiology for meningococcal disease. In 2016–17, the burden of disease was highest in children under 2 years old (especially children under 12 months old), with a secondary peak in adolescents. Cases were mostly due to serogroup B, followed by serogroup W. Incidence also increased in older people, mainly due to serogroups W and Y.
- ATAGI reviewed the recommended vaccination schedules for meningococcal disease and *Haemophilus influenzae* type b. A document containing these recommendations will be released for public consultation before the June ATAGI meeting, and will inform updates to the *Australian Immunisation Handbook*.

**Influenza**

- ATAGI noted efforts to ensure two new influenza vaccines are included on the National Immunisation Program in 2018. Fluvad® and Fluzone High Dose® are for use in people aged 65 years and older.
- ATAGI discussed a report of a systematic review on the safety of using inactivated influenza vaccines during pregnancy. More than 180 000 pregnant women had received influenza vaccine in 40 studies, and the vaccine was not associated with an increase in adverse pregnancy outcomes. The body of evidence supports influenza vaccination during pregnancy. There is evidence of a reduction in the rate of low birthweight newborns, and evidence of no increased risk of stillbirth, preterm births, congenital abnormalities or small-for-gestational-age births.
- ATAGI discussed the disease burden of influenza in children under 5 years old, and noted several states and territories have implemented vaccination programs for this age group.

**Hepatitis B**

- ATAGI updated its clinical advice on the [use of hepatitis B vaccines during supply shortages](#) out of session.

**Human papillomavirus (HPV)**

- ATAGI reviewed a draft publication from the HPV Working Party on the rationale behind introducing the 9-valent HPV vaccine in a 2-dose schedule. It includes a review of the key scientific evidence that underpinned the ATAGI recommendation update, which was implemented in January 2018. The manuscript is being prepared for publication in the journal [Communicable Diseases Intelligence](#).

## **Australian Immunisation Handbook**

- ATAGI was informed of progress towards transforming the *Australian Immunisation Handbook* from a print-based publication to a digital resource. The Department is working with experts in digital content delivery and web development to create a new digital presence for the Handbook, which is expected to be launched in 2018.

## **Timor-Leste National Immunization Technical Advisory Group**

- ATAGI was honoured to welcome a delegation from the Timor-Leste National Immunization Technical Advisory Group (NITAG) to the 65th meeting. The delegation presented a summary of Timor-Leste's immunisation program and the functions of the NITAG.
- ATAGI noted Timor-Leste's achievements in control of vaccine-preventable diseases, including vaccination coverage rates of 80% or higher in children.

## **Other issues in immunisation**

- ATAGI received an update on the [AusVaxSafety program](#). Participation in the program has increased substantially in all age groups.
- Data from AusVaxSafety clearly indicate that pregnant women who receive two vaccines on the same day (e.g. pertussis and influenza) do not have an increased risk of adverse events following immunisation or medical attendance.

## **Summary of decisions of key immunisation technical advisory groups of interest**

- Members noted the report from the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance 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 [Department of Health Immunisation website](#).
- 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 14 June to Friday 15 June 2018. The meeting agenda will be published on the [Department of Health Immunisation](#) website shortly before the meeting.