

Influenza A H1N1 (2009) Vaccine – MOH Circular

The following extracts are from a circular sent by the Ministry of Health dated 17 September 2009, to all Registered Medical Practitioners in Singapore:

Please be informed that at this time, the vaccine is not yet available to be ordered by patients. When IMC is able to secure stock of the vaccine, we will notify our patients via our website and newsletter.

Annex A (extract)

PRESS RELEASE - INFLUENZA A/H1N1 (2009) VACCINE (Embargoed till 17 Sept 2009 11am)

The Ministry of Health (MOH) has secured supplies from GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) for one million doses of its Influenza A (H1N1) vaccine. This is part of our phased and diversified approach in securing a sufficient quantity of the vaccine for our population. The GSK vaccines are expected for delivery by the end of this year.

Large scale vaccination, on a voluntary basis, will commence once we are satisfied with the safety and efficacy reviews of this vaccine, currently being undertaken internationally. A few countries have launched or announced their plans to conduct mass vaccinations for their people. We are closely watching their experience.

MOH will reserve part of the supply for essential personnel, including those in the healthcare sector. Most of the vaccines will be provided at cost to the GPs for use by their clientele. The cost of the GSK vaccine is comparable to the cost of normal seasonal flu vaccine. If the immediate demand exceeds the initial supply, we will advise the GPs to give greater priority to those who are at higher risk of developing complications from H1N1.

Influenza A (H1N1) remains pandemic globally. While it has remained relatively mild, and most patients have recovered fully from the disease, the virus may cause complications and even deaths amongst those with underlying medical problems, such as chronic lung diseases (e.g. asthma), diabetes, gross obesity, low immunity or those who are pregnant.

Vaccines are important medical interventions to reduce morbidity and mortality during a pandemic. The GSK contract should meet our immediate needs. MOH has an existing contract with Commonwealth Serum Laboratories (CSL) Australia Pte Ltd for further supplies of H1N1 vaccines.

Annex B (extract)

FAQ of Influenza A/H1N1 (2009) Vaccine for Medical Practitioners

1 When will the vaccines be available for use to Singaporeans?

A: Health Sciences Authority (HSA) is actively reviewing the safety and efficacy data of clinical trials that are currently being undertaken internationally. The key considerations in making the vaccines available to the public are the potential risks associated with the vaccine and the risk from H1N1. MOH will provide more details on the roll out plan at a later date.

2 Who are the population groups likely to benefit from the pandemic H1N1 vaccine?

A: The population groups that are likely to benefit would include those who are at higher risk of developing complications from Influenza A/H1N1 (2009). They include:

- Pregnant women;
- People with chronic medical conditions (lung disorders, heart diseases, diabetes, kidney failure, neuromuscular disorders); and
- People with chronically suppressed immunity due to disease or long-term medication.

Healthcare workers and Essential Service Personnel will also be offered vaccination.

3 What are the current safety and efficacy profile of GSK vaccine?

A: Clinical trials to establish the safety and efficacy of pandemic (H1N1) vaccines are still on-going. Details will be provided by HSA when more information is available.

4 Does a patient who was previously a confirmed case of Influenza A/H1N1 (2009) need to take this vaccination?

A: There is no need for a confirmed case of Influenza A/H1N1 (2009) infection to be vaccinated with the H1N1 vaccine.

5 Does a patient who had ILI but is not sure whether it was due to Influenza A/H1N1 (2009) still need to be vaccinated?

A: Vaccination can be considered especially if they are in the higher risk group.