



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Health Department

To: Chief Executives of NHS Boards
Immunisation Co-ordinators
Medical Directors, NHS Boards – for cascade
to GPs

Copy to: DsPH
Chief Pharmacists
SSiPPH – for cascade to Community
Pharmacists
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Dear Colleague

MUMPS OUTBREAKS IN SCOTLAND: OFFER OF MMR TO HIGH RISK INDIVIDUALS IN HIGH RISK SETTINGS

The purpose of this letter is to alert you to outbreaks of mumps infection in young people in many areas of Scotland and encourage you to offer MMR vaccine to susceptible individuals in, or about to enter, high risk settings such as universities in order to diminish the likelihood of further outbreaks in Scotland.

The Scottish Centre for Infection and Environmental Health have reported an increase recently in the number of mumps infections in Scotland. The areas particularly affected are Greater Glasgow, Lanarkshire and Argyll and Clyde, but 11 of 15 NHS Boards have confirmed cases. To date SCIEH is aware of 681 confirmed cases of mumps in Scotland over the approximately 7 month period from the end of November 2003 (Week 48) to the end of June 2004 (Week 26) compared with 13 cases for the same period in 2002/03.

The cases are mainly in young people aged 13-25 years and especially those aged around 17-20, ie those born between 1984 and 1987. This 17-20 age group approximately corresponds with those who were offered only a single dose of MMR through a "catch up" campaign at the time when MMR was first introduced into the routine programme in 1988. They have not been offered a second dose of MMR vaccine as part of routine or 'catch up' immunisation programmes and are therefore likely to have received only one dose of MMR vaccine or none at all. They also attended primary school in the years when mumps infection had fallen to very low levels. Please also note that the 1994 MR campaign protected young people from measles and rubella but not mumps.

Amongst this susceptible age group, the probability of mumps transmission occurring will be greatest in enclosed settings such as secondary schools, boarding schools, universities, colleges, barracks and prisons.

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In order to limit the spread of mumps in young people in Scotland we are encouraging you to offer opportunistic MMR vaccination to young people at risk aged 13-25, but particularly those aged 17-20, attending school, university or further education college who have not previously received two doses of mumps-containing vaccine. Ideally vaccination should be offered before the start of the next school/further education and university terms. Information materials aimed at this age group are being prepared.

NHS Boards and Immunisation Co-ordinators are reminded that MMR vaccination in the circumstances of an outbreak is a local enhanced service under the new Primary Medical Service contracting arrangements. NHS Boards are free to determine how and from whom such services are delivered. However, they will no doubt wish to have regard to the benefits around the use of GMS and Section 17C contractors, particularly those serving student populations, as well as costs, when placing contracts. In such circumstances, whether payment is to be made for each individual immunisation or for the campaign as a whole, Boards should follow the national benchmark pricing for influenza (to the under 65 at risk group) and pneumococcal immunisations. We are encouraging your Board to set up local outbreak arrangements now under the terms of the Primary Medical Services Act involving GMS, 17c and other arrangements to offer MMR vaccination to those young people defined above. It is anticipated that NHS Boards will fund these arrangements from their general allocations.

Supplies of the MMR vaccine can be ordered from Vaccine Holding Centres. It might be helpful to bear in mind if ordering vaccine that previous campaigns to vaccinate university students during a mumps outbreak resulted in an uptake of 20 - 30% (Ref: Smith KJ, McNaught R. A large outbreak of mumps amongst university students in Sheffield. Conference on the Epidemiology and Control of Infectious Diseases and Environmental Hazards; Glasgow; November 2003). The recent experience from the Stirling University Mumps Campaign aimed at residential students in the 17-20 age groups was an uptake of 25.3%.

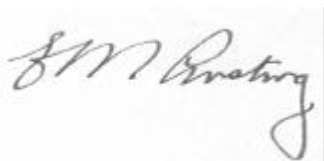
Routine Protection

As you will recall, the advice from the Green Book (1996 Immunisation against Infectious Diseases) states that

“Every effort should be made to ensure that all children are immunised even if they are older than the recommended age-range; no opportunity to immunise should be missed.”

The independent expert advisory body, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), has previously considered the issue of ensuring that teenagers were adequately protected against mumps. It recommended that young people who had received no or one dose of MMR vaccine should be offered another dose of vaccine.

Yours sincerely



DR E M ARMSTRONG

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