

MEMORANDUM TO THE BOARD

AGENDA ITEM

WAIKATO DISTRICT HEALTH BOARD: IMMUNISATION POSITION STATEMENT

Date: May 2013

Review Date: May 2016

Introduction

The following is a position statement on immunisation prepared by Population Health for Waikato District Health Board.

The Waikato District Health Board's Position

The Waikato District Health Board (Waikato DHB) agrees that immunisation is an effective preventative intervention which reduces burden and suffering, and can potentially eradicate diseaseⁱ. Increasing regional immunisation rates, as identified within the national health targets, is important because immunisation is a key public and personal health activity. National health targets 2013/14 aim for 95% of eight month olds to have completed primary immunisation by December 2014^{iv}.

The Waikato DHB believes that employees of the Waikato DHB should be aware of the Waikato DHB immunisation policy¹, and should not propagate information that conflicts with the Waikato DHB immunisation policy. The organisation will actively seek to distribute accurate information on immunisation and vaccine preventable diseases to the community.

The Waikato DHB will also support and encourage activities that lead to an increased number of fully immunised people within the Waikato DHB region (i.e. "opportunistic immunisation shall be offered where possible" highlighting the positive effects that integration between services can have on overall immunisation coverage). It is important that children receive their vaccinations on time, as per the New Zealand schedule, in order to provide protection while they are most vulnerable.

The Waikato DHB agrees that immunisation is an effective strategy to reduce inequalities and will promote initiatives that can help raise the immunisation rates of Māori and Pacific Island children, and those living in areas of deprivation.

The Waikato DHB gives its support to both the National Immunisation Programme and the National Immunisation Register.

International and National Background

The World Health Organisation states that immunisation is one of the most successful and cost effective ways of preventing disease and improving healthⁱ. Immunisation works by utilising the natural defense mechanisms of the body - the 'immune response'. Once the immunised person's resistance has been built up against a disease, if in future they come in contact with the disease their immune system will be more resilient against that diseaseⁱⁱ. Immunisation can provide protection for the individual and the community.

¹ This can be obtained from <http://166.83.144.90:84/Policy/files/Policies/Admin-Clinical/Immunisation%20policy%200206.pdf>

In New Zealand, vaccines that are a part of the national immunisation schedule² contribute to New Zealand's National Immunisation Programme which offers free vaccinations to people from eligible groups³.

Targeting historically low immunisation rates among Māori and Pacific Island children over recent years has seen marked improvements, with coverage now similar for all ethnic groups^v at two years of age. Investing in outreach services has also improved coverage among those living in deprivation. Improving immunisation rates in these groups will help prevent disease and reduce health inequalitiesⁱⁱ.

New Zealand has a computerised information system: The National Immunisation Register (NIR). The NIR holds immunisation details of New Zealand children born after birth cohort June 2005, as well as children immunised with the MeNZBTM vaccine and/ or Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine as part of the Meningococcal B and Human papillomavirus Immunisation programmes.

The NIR is a key tool that assists New Zealand to monitor and improve its immunisation rates, helps to ensure immunisations are given at appropriate times and enables authorised health professionals to quickly and easily find out what vaccines a child has been given (this includes children from families that are more mobile, or accessing multiple healthcare providers)ⁱⁱⁱ.

ⁱ World Health Organisation. (2009). Immunization. Retrieved March 2013 from the 'World Health Organisation' website: <http://www.who.int/topics/immunization/about/en/index.html>

ⁱⁱ Ministry of Health. (2013). Immunisation: About immunisation. Retrieved March 2013, from the 'Ministry of Health' website: <http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/preventative-health-wellness/immunisation>

ⁱⁱⁱ Immunisation Advisory Centre. (2013). National immunisation register. Retrieved March 2013, from the 'Immunisation Advisory Centre' website: <http://www.immune.org.nz/>

^{iv} Ministry of Health (2012). Health Targets 2012/2013: Increased immunisation. Retrieved March 2013 from the 'Ministry of Health' website <http://www.health.govt.nz/new-zealand-health-system/health-targets/2012-13-health-targets/health-targets-2012-13-increased-immunisation>

^v Ministry of Health (2013). National and DHB immunisation data. Retrieved March 2013 from the 'Ministry of Health' website: <http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/preventative-health-wellness/immunisation/immunisation-coverage/national-and-dhb-immunisation-data>

² A list of the vaccines that are a part of the national immunisation schedule are available at : <http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/indexmh/immunisation-schedule>

³ Eligible groups are different for each vaccine.