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File no: Fluletter 0110

Dear Doctor / Service Provider

Thank you for your participation in the 2009 influenza program. If you have not yet discarded the 2009 influenza vaccines please do so now.

Queensland Health is currently planning for the 2010 program. The influenza vaccine for this year in the southern hemisphere will include the following strains:

- A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)-like virus;
- A/Perth/16/2009 (H3N2)-like virus;
- B/Brisbane/60/2008-like virus.

There are some important changes for the influenza immunisation program in 2010.

Under *The National Immunisation Program 2010*, influenza vaccine will **be available free** for:

- Individuals aged 6 months to 64 years with Medical Risk Factors (as defined in the current *Australian Immunisation Handbook* pages 190-192) (NEW)
- Pregnant women (refer to page 192 current *Australian Immunisation Handbook*) (NEW)
- All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15-49 years (NEW)
- All individuals aged 65 years and over (EXISTING)
- All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 50 years and older (EXISTING).

Practices will receive approximately the same amount of influenza vaccine in their first order in 2010 as they received in 2009. New practices will be contacted directly to assess initial requirements.

Please note that vaccine deliveries will not commence until March due to a delay related to vaccine manufacture and the resulting supply issues. We suggest appointments for the 2010 program are made once your clinic/practice receives vaccine.

After receiving your first delivery, influenza vaccine can be ordered weekly for the first two months of the influenza program. This will assist clinics/practices to store vaccines safely. Ordering for childhood vaccines will remain monthly and will need to be done at the same time as an influenza vaccine order.

The expansion of the seasonal influenza program means that your clinic/practice may need to store additional vaccine. **Please consider your storage capacity very carefully to ensure that all vaccines can be stored safely and according to the recommendations in the *National Vaccine Storage Guidelines: Strive for Five*.**

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Note that while the seasonal influenza vaccine protects against the pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza strain, patients should be strongly advised to be vaccinated with the monovalent Panvax<sup>®</sup> H1N1 and not to wait for seasonal influenza vaccine. This is because:

- The second wave of pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza is likely to occur much earlier than seasonal influenza;
- Panvax<sup>®</sup> H1N1 is available free for all people and funded seasonal influenza vaccine is only available for those in the eligible groups;
- Thirty percent of people admitted to ICUs with pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza did not have a risk factor for severe disease; and
- Supply of seasonal influenza will be delayed, is finite and demand is likely to be high.

Please find enclosed fact sheets which provide information on dosages, eligibility groups, and storage requirements. It is important to keep this information for use during the program. Please contact the Queensland Health Immunisation Program (QHIP) on 3328 9888 if you need extra copies of this information.

Last year, with your assistance, we collected data on those vaccinated in your practice/clinic with government funded influenza vaccine. This was necessary because each year we experience significant leakage of vaccine during the influenza program to those not eligible for funded vaccine. The data indicated that leakage in the 2009 program was less than in previous years. We thank you for your cooperation.

In 2010, I am again asking you to keep data on patients vaccinated with government funded vaccine. This will enable Queensland Health to gauge vaccine uptake among the new eligibility groups. A data sheet is included with this letter. **QHIP will advise when you need to provide data sheets.**

Information on influenza vaccination given to children up to 7 years of age will be recorded on the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR) if this data is provided by the clinic/practice, however no payment will be made for the information.

Some clients visiting your practice may identify as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. If they do, it is important they are offered influenza vaccine. All influenza and pneumococcal vaccinations given to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people must be recorded on Vaccination Record Forms or your practice printout and sent to VIVAS in the usual manner.

We appreciate your support and look forward to a successful program in 2010.

Yours sincerely

ORIGINAL AUTHORISED AND SIGNED

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