



Response to Gardasil® warning letter being sent to schools in February 2009

This is an Immunisation Advisory Centre response to an unsigned letter being sent to school concerning the Gardasil® vaccine. It addresses the issues and inaccuracies contained in the letter.

Below are the key points from the letter;

What is Gardasil?

Gardasil® is a vaccine against 4 types of human papillomavirus that leads to the majority of cases of cervical cancer and genital warts. In order to be most effective it must be administered prior to the onset of sexual activity as this is when infection with the virus is most likely to occur.

What Gardasil is not

Gardasil® is not useful in protecting people against risky sexual behavior.

Concern about adequate testing of the vaccine

The Gardasil® vaccine has undergone extensive testing in many countries all over the world including New Zealand. Its safety profile is well documented. Monitoring of both the safety and effectiveness is long term, ongoing and continues to reinforce the results from the clinical trials. The long term side effects of the vaccine have been studied for over 6 years. It is highly unlikely problems will arise after this length of time, however monitoring is ongoing.

Other than allergic reactions, the side effects listed in the letter are not vaccine related. They are conditions which have been noted to have occurred in vaccine recipients and in all the extensive research to date these events are no more likely to be seen in vaccinated people than unvaccinated people. When a large amount of people are vaccinated it is important to separate out events that occur coincidentally from those that are genuinely vaccine-related. Hence the importance of the data from the large clinical trials that compare populations of vaccinated with unvaccinated (controls) as well as the surveillance that occurs after the vaccine comes into use, also comparing vaccinated with unvaccinated people.

Vaccine components

The vaccine components are listed on the datasheet, various websites and provided to all vaccinators.

Boys should be vaccinated too

The objective for our government is to reduce the incidence of cervical cancer. Data show that vaccinating young girls and women is the best way to do this. The use of this vaccine in boys to reduce the incidence of this infection in the population has not yet been well studied so the effectiveness of using the vaccine in boys for this purpose is not yet known.

For further information

www.immune.org.nz

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