Having immunisation conversations and the challenges of communication

Sept 7th 2017 Wellington, NZ

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Our perspective on diseases

- Diseases can be very severe
- Limitations in treatment success
Our perspective on vaccines

- The opportunity to prevent

- The risk of diseases outweighs the risk of vaccine side-effects
The range of topics for today

- Understanding the knowledge-transfer gap
  - Diseases
  - Vaccines
- Understanding the challenges of communication
- Respectful, non-judgmental discussions
  - Active listening
  - Answering questions
  - Providing resources
Explaining to parents

- Diseases
  - The young immune system
  - Limitations in treatment
  - The relevance to their child

- Vaccines
  - How vaccines are made
  - Vaccine side-effects
  - Conjugate vaccines
  - Important imported diseases
  - Combination vaccines
  - Vaccine additives
  - Live vaccines
  - Options
It OK for parents to worry about vaccine side-effects

- All medicines have side-effects
- All immunisations have side-effects
Consider this...

- Plane crash
- It is a valid worry
- Why don’t we demonstrate a respect for all people with worries about vaccine side-effects?
- Why do some people refer to them as
  - ‘The worried well’?
People ask me why do we immunise against:

- Polio
- Diphtheria
- Tetanus
- Pertussis
- Haemophilus influenza type B
- Hepatitis B (and A)
- Measles
- Mumps
- Rubella
- Meningococcal C
- Varicella
- Influenza
- HPV
- Meningococcal W
Previously...

Knowledge exchange about diseases

- Neighbours
- Family dinners
- Newspapers
- TV
- Radio
Now...

- Knowledge transfer gap about diseases
  - What are these diseases?
  - How bad can they be?
  - Can we treat them?
  - How likely is it my child will get the disease?

- Knowledge exchange about vaccine side-effects
Knowledge transfer gap about diseases and vaccines

- How well do vaccines work?
- Why are there so many at the one time?
- Why are they given so young?
- Why do we give vaccines for diseases we don’t have in NZ?
- Why do we give hep B vaccine at birth?
- How do I know my baby won’t have a rare major side-effect?
In addition...

We are not all the same with our approach to medicine

- Background beliefs in medicine
- Experience with the health system
- Experience with vaccines
- (Theo...)
Exploring the challenges of immunisation communication

Theo Brandt
The Immunisation Advisory Centre
10th NZ Immunisation Conference
Vision

Healthy communities protected from vaccine preventable diseases.
Why aren’t we there yet?

Barriers

Enablers
Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization

- Define vaccine hesitancy
- Its determinants and impact
- Monitoring and diagnosis
- Strategies to address vaccine hesitancy
- Recommendations
The vaccine hesitancy continuum

Accept all

Accept some, Delay, Refuse some

Accept, but unsure

Refuse, but unsure

Refuse all
Factors that influence the decisions: The WHO’s 3 Cs
### Determinants of vaccine hesitancy matrix

| **Contextual influences** | a. Communication and media environment  
b. Influential leaders, programme gatekeepers, and anti or pro vaccination lobbies  
c. Historical influences  
d. Religion/culture/gender/socio-economic  
e. Politics/policies  
f. Geographical barriers  
g. Perception of the Pharmaceutical industry  

| **Individual and group influences** | a. Personal, family and/or community experience with vaccination, including pain  
b. Beliefs, attitudes about health and prevention  
c. Knowledge/awareness  
d. Health system -trust and personal experience  
e. Risk/benefit (perceived, heuristic)  
f. Immunisation as a social norm vs not needed/harmful  

| **Vaccine/Vaccination-specific issues** | a. Risk/benefit (scientific evidence)  
b. Introduction of a new vaccine/new formulation/new recommendation  
c. Mode of administration  
d. Design of vaccination program  
e. Reliability and/or source of vaccine supply  
f. Strength of recommendations and or knowledge base/attitude of health professionals |
Communication is a tool, not a determinant of vaccine hesitancy

But poor communication can undermine confidence
Some conclusions

• Vaccine hesitancy is very complex
• Addressing it within a country or subgroup needs a tailored approach
• No single intervention strategy addresses all instances of vaccine hesitancy
What about New Zealand?
Intentions for immunisation of the Growing Up in New Zealand children before birth, by their mothers

Mother's intention to immunise (n=6,822)

- 81% Child fully immunised
- 13% Child partially immunised
- 4% Child not immunised
- 2% Undecided

What happened

Infant immunisations received on time
(n = 6,589)

- 70% Yes
- 30% No

Antenatal immunisation intentions of expectant parents: Relationship to immunisation timeliness during infancy, Grant et al, Vaccine 35 (2016) 1379-1388
Sources of encouraging immunisation information

Sources of discouraging immunisation information

Why aren’t we there yet?

Discouraging information

Encouraging information
The 'M.A.P.' - Mutually Agreed Plan

- An approach
  - To helping families who have chosen to omit or delay immunisations

- A communication style
  - To assist families feel more comfortable proceeding to immunise their children.
The M.A.P.- Mutually Agreed Plan

1. A non-judgmental style & approach

2. Consider the specific family concerns

3. The explanation
   - Local disease data
   - Acknowledge vaccine side-effects
Listen to questions people have about immunisations

- Respect people and their opinions
- Put yourself in their shoes
- Engage them in the knowledge
- Life-long approach to preventative medicine
Respect that opinions are dynamic

- Opinions can change
- I don't usher people to have my opinion
- Provide helpful information
Ask why?

- Year 7 boy
  - HPV vaccine
My approach - ‘Mutually Agreed Plan’

- Be helpful
- Find out their specific concerns
- Listen...
- Acknowledge their concerns
- Acknowledge vaccine side-effects

- Educate
  - Vaccines
  - Diseases
Michael, 7 weeks old

Mum and grandmother
Michael – 7 weeks old

Mum and grandmother

- We are not anti-vaccine
- We just have concerns about vaccine side-effects....
Address specific family opinions

- This family is worried about vaccine side-effects
  - The young immune system
  - Combination vaccines
  - Vaccine ingredients
  - Vaccines and developmental conditions
  - Immunising against ‘unnecessary diseases’
  - Vaccines ‘not working very well’
Individual family details, Michael (holistic medicine)

- Pregnancy
  - (pertussis vaccine history)
- Delivery
- Birth hep B
- Feeding/sleeping
- Coping
- Infant development
Don’t just answer the question...

- Opportunistic education
I am worried about Michael getting ...

- Whooping cough (Pertussis)
- Meningitis
We make different vaccines for different reasons

1. **No treatment**
   - Pertussis, measles, mumps, rubella

2. **Treatment can’t guarantee a good outcome**
   - Hib (Haemophilus Influenzae type B)
   - Pneumococcal
   - Meningococcal

3. **To prevent cancer**
   - Hepatitis B
   - HPV

4. **To prevent disease complications**
   - Rotavirus, chicken pox (varicella), influenza
How are vaccines made?

- Explain
- Eg. Tetanus
Why do we immunise against polio and diphtheria?

- Important Imported Diseases
How are vaccines made?

- **Explain**

- **Eg. Tetanus**
- **Eg. Diphtheria**
- **Eg. Pertussis**

- **Eg. Hib (conjugate vaccines)**
Discussing combination vaccines

My approach to this

- Explain the potential advantages of combination vaccines
- This is what I have available (apologize for limitations)
Discussing vaccine components

My approach to this...

- Explain
  - This is what I have available
  - The future
- Provide resources*
Discussions about the young immune system

- My approach to this ...
  - Explain diseases and the young immune system
  - Remember
    - We make different vaccines for different reasons
Discussions about killed and live vaccines

- Explain
  - Why they are made live
  - How they are made
  - Potential side-effects
  - Draw a graph of the timing of side-effects
Discussions about vaccines and developmental problems

Why is this particular family concerned about developmental issues?

My approach to this ...

- Explain
  - Developmental issues
    - What are they
    - Rare regression
    - Acknowledge concerns about developmental issues
  - Known side-effects from MMR
  - Timing of vaccines
The explanation …

- The level of worry about the vaccine doesn’t need to be zero
- They can still feel a very real element of risk
  - Because
    - All medicines have side-effects
    - Just like aspirin and paracetamol
The explanation ...

 Teach and explain (diseases and vaccines)
   - Risks
   - Benefits

 Immunisation plan
   - Options
   - Apologize for limitations in the options

 Modify the plan as you go
Individualise the conversations

- Age-specific

- Doesn't need to be an 'all or none' approach
  - If already overdue
  - Consider one vaccine

- Dynamic conversations
  - Change the discussion as you go

- Resources
Acknowledgments

IMAC
- Loretta Roberts, Nikki Turner, Theo Brandt, Bernadette Heaphy and team

Ora Toa Primary Health Organisation
- Faith Woodcock

Immunisation CRE, Sydney
- Raina Macintyre, and the Aboriginal stream team

Immunisation Research Co-investigators
- James Ward, Amy Creighton, Brendon Kelaher, Peter McIntyre, Kate Russo, Wendy Bissenger, Robert Menzies

NCIRS
- Telphia Joseph, Julie Leask

NEST Family Clinic Elsternwick, Melbourne
- Bronwyn Allen and team

Port Melbourne Medical Clinic
- Chris McDonell