

# **Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI)**

## **69th meeting**

**13 and 14 June 2019**

### **ATAGI BULLETIN**

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) 69th face-to-face meeting was held on 13 and 14 June 2019 in Canberra.

#### **Influenza**

- ATAGI reviewed data from AusVaxSafety for the 2019 influenza season and was reassured by the low rates of adverse events following influenza vaccination.
- ATAGI provided advice to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) on influenza vaccines for young children and people over 65 years of age.

#### **Pertussis**

- ATAGI noted AusVaxSafety data on the 4th dose of pertussis-containing vaccine in children, after reports of additional adverse events at this schedule point. Although differences between vaccines were noted, ATAGI was reassured that the safety profile of both vaccines were comparable to the published literature, and the risk did not increase following subsequent doses. ATAGI therefore considered that the benefits to the National Immunisation Program (NIP) of having two vaccine brands available for this schedule point outweighed any potential risks. ATAGI noted that this case highlights the importance of ongoing safety surveillance through AusVaxSafety and other programs.
- ATAGI was pleased to note that the Product Information for Adacel® (diphtheria–tetanus–pertussis vaccine) had adopted pregnancy Category A. Category A relates to medicines that have been taken by a large number of pregnant women and women of childbearing age without any proven increase in the frequency of malformations or other direct or indirect harmful effects on the fetus.

#### **Special risk groups**

- ATAGI continues its commitment to informing vaccination policy for people in special risk groups, such as people with medical conditions that increase their risk of disease.
- ATAGI welcomed the PBAC's recommendation to fund several vaccines under the NIP for people with asplenia or hyposplenia, as well as people with complement deficiency or undergoing eculizumab treatment. ATAGI also noted the PBAC's planned discussion at its July 2019 meeting of a cost-effectiveness review into pneumococcal vaccines and a simplified pneumococcal vaccine schedule. ATAGI looks forward to the PBAC's outcomes and communicating with providers about changes.

## **Pneumococcal disease**

- ATAGI provided additional advice to the PBAC on vaccines to prevent invasive pneumococcal disease in older people and people with medical conditions that increase their risk of pneumococcal disease.

## **Dengue**

- ATAGI discussed and endorsed the *ATAGI clinical advice for immunisation providers regarding use of Dengvaxia® for Australians*. The advice has been published on the [Department of Health website](#). The advice reiterates that Dengvaxia® should not be used in people who have not had previous dengue infection, and that Australian travellers are not recommended to receive Dengvaxia® for short-term stays in dengue-endemic areas, even if they have had previous dengue infection, as there is little evidence for safety and efficacy in this context.

## **Tuberculosis**

- ATAGI expressed concern at the ongoing global shortage of BCG vaccine and the lack of a licensed product in Australia to cover the recommendations in the Australian Immunisation Handbook (the Handbook) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and children travelling to endemic areas. ATAGI considered that the current BCG vaccine supply does not meet demand, and the current processes that allow access to BCG vaccines are not optimal.

## **Australian Immunisation Handbook**

- ATAGI discussed and endorsed proposed changes to rabies vaccination recommendations, and will seek further advice and comment from expert groups before public consultation to revise the Handbook chapter.
- ATAGI was pleased to hear progress on future developments for the Handbook, including an app and a national whole-of-life catch-up calculator. A formal evaluation of the digital Handbook is being considered after its first year of use. ATAGI continues to welcome feedback from Handbook users through the [Handbook website](#).

## **Other ATAGI business**

- Members noted that Professor Isaacs, Professor Marshall and Ms Peterson were standing down as ATAGI members. ATAGI thanked these members for their significant contribution to the NIP and service to the committee.
- ATAGI discussed upcoming changes to its structure, role and membership, and continues to work with stakeholders towards streamlined processes for the future. From 1 July 2019, ATAGI will meet 6 times a year, in February, May, June, August, October and December.
- New members will be joining ATAGI from the August 2019 meeting.

- ATAGI discussed the successful Industry Day held on 12 June. A wide range of vaccine manufacturers in the region attended to provide updates on their future vaccine products for Australia.
- ATAGI noted a report on adult vaccination data recorded on the Australian Immunisation Register.
- ATAGI noted the presentation from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare on the burden of vaccine-preventable diseases in 2015. ATAGI discussed the importance of data on burden of disease to inform vaccination policy and looks forward to the full publication of the report.

### **Other issues in immunisation**

- ATAGI noted that the World Health Organization had recently identified vaccine hesitancy as one of the 10 greatest threats to global health in 2019. ATAGI discussed how its role as a technical advisory group could complement the work of other committees in the broader context of immunisation.
- ATAGI received an update on epidemiology of vaccine-preventable diseases from the Communicable Diseases Network Australia and a summary of recent deliberations and recommendations from key national immunisation technical advisory groups (NITAGs) of interest from the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS).

### **Notes and resources**

- ATAGI's membership, terms of reference and conflict of interest information are available on the [Department of Health website](#).
- The digital [Australian Immunisation Handbook](#) is available on the Department's website.
- The summary of decisions of key immunisation technical advisory groups of interest report will be available on the [NCIRS website](#).
- Information on NITAGs worldwide is available on the [NITAG Resource Centre website](#).
- Next ATAGI meeting: 21 to 23 August 2019. The [meeting agenda](#) will be published on the Department of Health website shortly before the meeting.