

**Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI)
56th meeting
19 and 20 February 2015**

ATAGI BULLETIN

- The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) 56th face-to-face meeting was held on 19 and 20 February 2015 in Canberra.
- Members noted that a new ATAGI member, Associate Professor Noel Hayman, had been appointed as the second general practitioner on ATAGI and would be present at the next ATAGI meeting. Associate Professor Hayman has worked on many initiatives to improve the health of Indigenous people, particularly in the areas of diabetes and immunisation.
- ATAGI revised its conflict of interest (CoI) policy for increased transparency and consistency relating to management of potential conflicts, changing the way that declarations are categorised, and improving the assessment and management of CoIs. ATAGI has published its members' individual declarations of CoIs on the Immunise Australia website.
- Professor Ross Andrews, ATAGI Chair, provided a summary of the third International Technical Workshop on Procedures for the Development of Evidence-Informed Recommendations for Immunization, held on 8–9 December 2014 in Paris, France. Key outcomes from the workshop included a commitment to improve mechanisms for sharing information among national immunisation technical advisory groups (NITAGs) around the world, and to encourage support for neighbouring countries' NITAGs.
- ATAGI was advised that Zostavax® (herpes zoster [shingles] vaccine, bioCSL) for 70 year olds (ongoing) and 71–79 year olds (catch-up), and Infanrix® (diphtheria–tetanus–acellular pertussis vaccine, GSK) for 18 month olds were recommended for listing on the National Immunisation Program at the November 2014 meeting of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC).
- Members noted the verbal report from the Communicable Diseases Network Australia (CDNA) representative regarding an increase in pertussis notifications in the recent months in some jurisdictions in 2014 (New South Wales and Victoria), which may represent a resurgence of another pertussis epidemic period. Nationally, pertussis notifications have continued to decline since their peak in 2011; however, given the cyclic nature of pertussis epidemics, an increase is expected and members considered it likely that recent and upcoming birth cohorts will be more vulnerable to pertussis.
- ATAGI endorsed the proposed revisions to the 2015 annual update of the 10th edition of the *Australian Immunisation Handbook* following public consultation, and identified priority chapters and sections that would require amendments for the 2016 update. Members were advised that an evaluation of the 10th edition Handbook is under way and is expected to be completed in Quarter Four 2015.
- ATAGI was advised that the revised Handbook chapter on pertussis—including a strengthened recommendation for maternal vaccination in the third trimester of pregnancy—will be fast-tracked for publication in March 2015, with the remaining

chapters to be published in July 2015 following endorsement by the National Health and Medical Research Council.

- Members endorsed the postsubmission advice to the PBAC regarding the following applications, which will be considered at the March 2015 PBAC meeting:
 - Prevenar 13® (13-valent pneumococcal conjugate vaccine, Pfizer) for older Australians on the National Immunisation Program.
 - postsubmission Fluarix Tetra® (quadrivalent influenza vaccine, GSK) for individuals aged ≥ 3 years
 - Hexaxim® (diphtheria–tetanus–acellular pertussis–hepatitis B–polio–*Haemophilus influenzae* type b combination vaccine, Sanofi-Aventis) for infants.
- The CDNA/ATAGI Working Group on Rabies is developing criteria to assess available rabies immunoglobulin products in the event of a shortage; further work will be presented at the June 2015 ATAGI meeting.
- ATAGI noted that the double strain change required for the 2015 Southern Hemisphere seasonal influenza vaccine had resulted in manufacturing delays, which had, in turn, led to a delay for the start of the 2015 National Seasonal Influenza Immunisation Program in 2015. The ATAGI statement on clinical advice for immunisation providers regarding the administration of 2015 seasonal influenza vaccines has been published on the Immunise Australia website.
- ATAGI noted the changes to the definition of ‘fully immunised’ from the quarter ending 31 December 2014. The change added meningococcal C (given at 12 months), and dose 2 measles–mumps–rubella (MMR) and dose 1 varicella (given as MMRV at 18 months) to the definition of fully immunised for the 24–27-month cohort. With the inclusion of these immunisations to the coverage calculation, there has been a drop in the 24–27-month coverage rates from 92.8% in Quarter Three to 87.3% in Quarter Four. From past experience of similar changes to the coverage definition, this apparent fall is anticipated to resolve over time as the changes become more routine, and is being monitored through quarterly reporting from the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register.
- Members noted the key recommendations and commentaries from various NITAGs and the World Health Organization Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization.
- Representatives from ATAGI and the Department of Health met with Medicines Australia on 18 February 2015 to discuss time frames and the process for provision of ATAGI’s advice on vaccine manufacturers’ submissions to the PBAC for vaccines to be included on the National Immunisation Program.
- Membership of six current ATAGI members will expire on 31 December 2015. An advertisement for expressions of interest to fill these positions will be published in *The Australian* in Quarter Two 2015.
- The 57th meeting of ATAGI will be held in June 2015 in Canberra.

Notes

- ATAGI’s membership and terms of reference are available on the Immunise Australia website at www.immunise.health.gov.au (see ‘Immunisation Advisory Bodies’).
- The *Australian Immunisation Handbook* is available on the Immunise Australia website at www.immunise.health.gov.au (see ‘Australian Immunisation Handbook 10th Edition 2013’).