



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing

CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

Dear Doctor

I am writing about this year's influenza vaccinations for people aged 65 years and over provided through the Australian Government funded *Influenza for Older Australians Program*.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has detected that the vaccine supplied by Sanofi Pasteur did not meet the applicable specifications. The vaccine was not deemed unsafe, but failed the TGA batch testing because one of the influenza strains was not the full strength required by the specifications.

This will result in a delay in the delivery of 35% of the supply of influenza vaccines for the Program this year. These vaccines will be available in your practices progressively during the last two weeks in April and early May.

Sufficient vaccine will be available throughout March and April for you to immunise all your most vulnerable patients, but you may need to defer immunisation of those at lesser risk.

You should use your clinical judgement in determining which of your patients are most at risk from the complications of influenza.

I have consulted with infectious disease and public health experts who have advised that, as the influenza season does not usually commence before late May, there will be no significant public health impact from the delay in arrival of the vaccines.

If you require any further information, please contact the Immunise Australia Infoline on 1800 671 811 (available weekdays).

Yours sincerely

Professor John Horvath AO
March 2005