



**Australia's general practice immunisation newsletter**

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**HPV Vaccine**

The much anticipated roll out of this vaccine is due to start next month. The school based program will start in late April or May depending on the school holidays and the arrangements made with the jurisdictional providers. The ages or school year groupings due to be vaccinated this year depend on the jurisdiction. Some are processing the years 10, 11, and 12 girls this year and then years 7, 8, 9 and 10 in 2008. Others have different year groupings. Please check with your jurisdictional health department to verify the roll out in your area.

The General Practice program will begin in July with GPs being asked to vaccinate all girls and women aged 18 to 26 plus those over 12 who are no longer at school. The GP program will continue until June 2009. After this date there will be no funded vaccine available for these age groups and the whole HPV program will remain as a first year of secondary school based program. GPs will still be able to provide the vaccine privately.

Up to date information on the programs can be found on the Department of Health and Ageing web site [http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/gardasil\\_hpv.htm](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/gardasil_hpv.htm)

Information on the relationship between Human Papillomavirus and cervical cancer and the vaccine can be found on the NCIRS fact sheet site; [http://www.ncirs.usyd.edu.au/facts/hpv\\_oct\\_2006.pdf](http://www.ncirs.usyd.edu.au/facts/hpv_oct_2006.pdf)

It is very important to continue to stress the need for all women aged between 18 and 69 to continue with their regular Pap smear tests whether or not they have been vaccinated.

It is also important for all providers to ensure that the funded vaccine is given to the correct group of girls and not to boys or older women. The vaccine is licensed for girls 9 to 26 year of age and although it is licensed for boys 9 to 15 it is not funded for this group.

Both providers of the school based program and the General Practice program will be required to record all data associated with this vaccine. This will provide vital information for future research into the success of this program and any possible associated program. Details on the method of recording will be provided as soon as they are available and definitely before July.

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Information contained within this newsletter is intended to inform you on immunisation issues with a national perspective. As such, it is possible that some references will require adjustment to be made specifically accurate for service providers in each individual State or Territory jurisdiction. For further clarification, contact your SBO Immunisation Coordinator or jurisdiction Health Department.

AGPN is funded by the Department of Health and Ageing

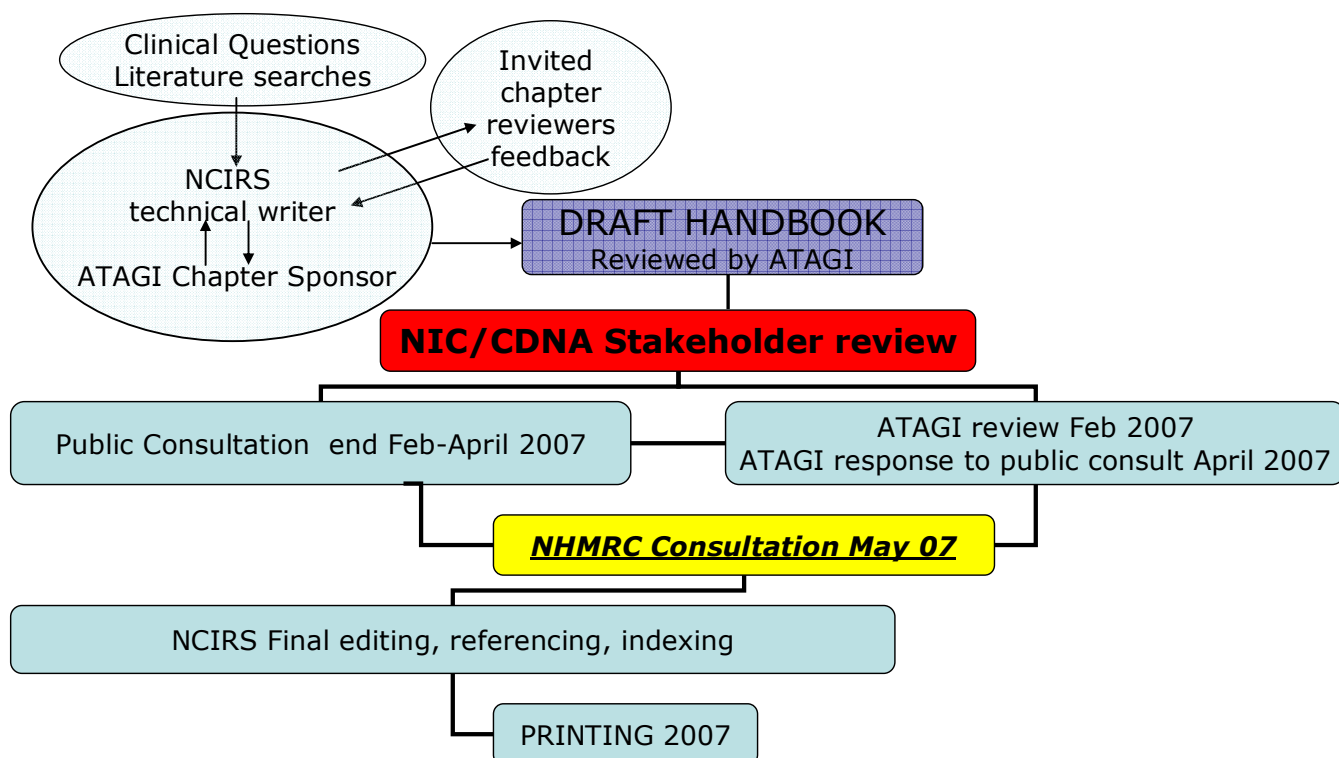
## The 9<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Australian Immunisation Handbook

The Australian Immunisation Handbook has been rewritten over the past year or so and has involved a dedicated team of reviewers and writers. In response to questions as to why it has taken so long to be published, the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS) has provided a flow chart to show the various stages in the process.

The end result of this process is now available for public consultation from 24 February to 6 April 2007. The new edition can be accessed from this web page. To speed up printing or reading of the document it is advisable to save it to your computer first.

<http://www.immunise.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/Content/handbook07>

# Production process for 9<sup>th</sup> Australian Immunisation Handbook<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Diagram prepared by National Centre for Immunisation Research

## Rotavirus

In November 2006 the PBAC approved funding for rotavirus vaccines. The decision to allocate that funding is still part of the Government cabinet processes and will be reported on as soon as the decision is announced.

The Northern Territory government has been funding the vaccine for all babies born from August 1<sup>st</sup> 2006 and intends continuing with the program.

Rotavirus is one of the most common causes of infectious gastroenteritis and infant hospitalisations in Australia and affects nearly all children before they turn five. Every year in Australia, rotavirus infections result in approximately 20,000 Emergency Department visits, 10,000 hospital admissions and more than 100,000 GP visits. There are many strains of rotavirus and they vary from season to season and from place to place. In Australia, five commonly occurring strains (G1, G2, G3, G4 & G9) have caused at least 85% of infections from 1997 to 2004. (NCIRS)

There are now two oral rotavirus vaccines in the market indicated for the prevention of rotavirus gastroenteritis, RotaTeq® and Rotarix.

For information on rotavirus and the 2 vaccines available, visit the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS) fact Sheets directly at [http://www.ncirs.usyd.edu.au/facts/f-fact\\_sheets.html](http://www.ncirs.usyd.edu.au/facts/f-fact_sheets.html)

## Influenza

Over 1,500 Australians die each year from complications caused by influenza. Less than half the people most at risk of developing life threatening complications from influenza are being vaccinated annually. In fact only 20-50 per cent of health care workers are being vaccinated. These people are at an increased risk of both getting and spreading influenza by the very nature of their occupations. As the General Practice Network is very much a health care network striving for quality primary health care services across the country, it is important that the influenza messages are taken on board and that the Network leads by example.

Influenza is not a cold. It is a highly contagious disease that kills the same number of people who die on our roads each year. As vaccination is the single most effective protection against influenza, it is interesting to look at the reasons that people in the health care sector choose not to be covered. These reasons range from needle phobia to the belief that the flu shot will give the flu.

This year's "Fight Flu" campaign has been developed by the National Institute of Clinical Studies (NICS). This organisation is government funded and is Australia's national agency for closing gaps between evidence and practice in health care. NICS has developed a website to provide the facts about influenza, dispel the myths and provide some tools to help fight flu.

<http://www.fightflu.com.au>

## SBOIC Network Meeting

The State Based Organisation Immunisation Coordinators held their first face to face networking meeting for the year in February. The Coordinators had discussions with officers from the Department of Health and Ageing and Medicare Australia on a range of issues including the roll out of the new vaccines and various reporting issues. Dr Jan Davies, Executive Officer and Director for Influenza at the National Institute for Clinical Studies, addressed the group on the positives and negatives of the influenza campaign for 2006 and the proposed campaign for 2007. The Immunisation Coordinators met with the Nursing in General Practice Coordinators for a joint session to discuss issues that affect both areas. These joint sessions have been arranged as part of the developing and strengthening the network.

The joint meeting was addressed by Ian McHenry, Senior Policy Adviser with AGPN who gave a presentation on Pandemic Flu preparedness and the results of Exercise Cumpston, a national coordinated exercise run late last year and designed to test of Australia's National Pandemic Plan.

The exercise tested the nation's readiness to deal with pandemic flu cases and in particular, it tested the response of jurisdictions to manage "ill" passengers arriving at Brisbane International Airport. General practice was involved in the running of a fever clinic scenario and providing observers and advisers.

### **NCIRS Fact Sheets**

A reminder that the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS), provides expert and relevant information concerning immunisation and vaccine preventable diseases. The centre produces Fact Sheets which are an excellent resource. The NCIRS website can be found at <http://www.ncirs.usyd.edu.au/> and the Fact Sheets can be accessed directly at [http://www.ncirs.usyd.edu.au/facts/f-fact\\_sheets.html](http://www.ncirs.usyd.edu.au/facts/f-fact_sheets.html)

### **Australian General Practice Network Forum**

The ninth annual General Practice Forum will be held in Hobart from the 15-19 November 2007. Information on the program, accommodation and associated events will be publicised as soon as they are released.