

Media Release

Wheatbelt
GP Network



Building healthy communities through General Practice.

25 September 2009

SWINE FLU VACCINATION ROLL OUT IN THE HANDS OF GENERAL PRACTICE

Lowering the risk of a second wave of swine flu (Influenza H1N1) in the Wheatbelt through the flu vaccination program will be in the hands of local general practices, says Dr Duncan Steed, Chair of the Wheatbelt GP Network.

The Commonwealth has purchased 21 million doses of the swine flu vaccine (Panvax). The first instalment has been distributed to general practices and the national vaccination program begins officially from Wednesday, 30 September. The vaccine is only available through general practice or state run clinics.

People who wish to have the vaccination should contact their general practice to find out the vaccination process, advises Dr Steed.

"Some general practices will be running 'flu clinics', offering a block of time where patients can attend to have vaccination. Others will be managing on a case-by-case basis, others will be aiming to target their vulnerable populations first," said Dr Steed.

The influenza vaccination will be available to anyone over 10 years old who wishes to have it, though the Federal Government is encouraging General Practitioners (GPs) to ensure health care workers, pregnant women, Indigenous Australians and people with underlying medical conditions are vaccinated as a priority.

The Government is advising that the vaccine is similar to the seasonal flu vaccine and is safe. The company which developed the vaccine is Australian based and have been creating the seasonal influenza vaccine for about 40 years.

The vaccination program is important to avoid a second wave of flu epidemic hitting Australian shores. "While we are seeing flu numbers drop as winter comes to an end, we are aware of increasing influenza in the northern hemisphere. It's also worth noting that the swine flu epidemic hit the northern hemisphere during their summer, so it may not just be a winter illness," said Dr Steed.



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Under-10s are not able to be vaccinated yet, because the safety trials on the paediatric version were not completed. This is expected to be cleared shortly.

The Wheatbelt GP Network will be supporting local general practices with information about using multi-dose vials, organising flu clinics and recall reminder through our immunisation program. This is an important role for general practice to ensure the Wheatbelt community is protected against further outbreaks of this disease.

End.

For media inquiries please phone Trisha Ellis on (08) 9621 1530 or email memberservices@wheatbelt.com.au



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