

Medicines Governance Project



SAFETY MEMO

18th October 2002

RE: Pneumococcal Immunisation for those aged 65 and over.

As you are aware, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety has recommended that all adults aged 65 and over should be offered pneumococcal immunisation (HSS (MD)21/2002).

The majority of people will be vaccinated in the community setting however the situation may arise where a patient will be vaccinated in hospital.

A single vaccination offers protection against pneumococcal infection for up to 10 years and re-immunisation is only advised for selected patients e.g. asplenic patients.

Re-vaccination within 3 years of a previous injection may cause severe reactions in some subjects.

To reduce the risk of severe reactions, the Medicines Governance Team recommends that:

- Prior to pneumococcal vaccination within a hospital, confirmation should be sought that the patient has not received this vaccine within the last 3 years – either in the primary or secondary care setting.
- The patients General Practitioner should be informed if a patient is vaccinated during a hospital admission.
- A record the date of vaccination must be made in the hospital notes.

Many hospitals will already be aware of and have dealt with this issue, however it is advised that HSS Trusts review their arrangements for pneumococcal vaccination and ensure the risk of premature revaccination is minimised.