

By Email

2 - 4 Victoria House
Capital Park
Fulborun
Cambridge
CB21 5XB

To:

31 October 2018

Community Pharmacists

Dear colleague

Guidance for Community Pharmacists in England: advice for patients aged 65 years and over regarding 2018/19 flu vaccination

The adjuvanted trivalent vaccine (aTIV) has been recommended for people over 65 years as it gives the best available protection against flu. The manufacturer of aTIV, Seqirus, has confirmed there is enough vaccine supply available to the NHS in England to meet expected demand. By mid-November, the complete order for 8.3 million doses of aTIV will have been delivered to GP practices, pharmacies and other providers in England, so vaccine availability in total exceeds anticipated requirements. In 2017/18, around 7.4million over 65s were immunised against flu.

As previously advised (see Annex), it was necessary to have phased deliveries in 2018-19 to enable the vaccine to be available for this year's flu season. For 2018-19 the aTIV phased deliveries to all practices were on a schedule of: 40% being available in September, 20% in October and the final 40% in November.

Patients can be reassured that as flu usually becomes more common from December onwards, the remaining over 65s can receive their flu jab in November and still benefit from its protective effect.

Community pharmacists' support is essential to ensuring all patients have the appropriate advice and information about their flu vaccine, and that over 65s have the opportunity to obtain aTIV as the final deliveries take place over the coming weeks.

Specifically, community pharmacists are advised to actively encourage patients to receive the most effective vaccine available for them, including ensuring patients are

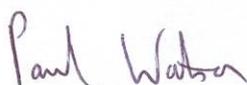
High quality care for all, now and for future generations

booked into any clinics or appointments that are scheduled in line with planned deliveries. Community pharmacies which offer opportunistic vaccinations should ensure that they are aware of which other providers have vaccine if their own stocks have been depleted and signpost the patient accordingly.

To support pharmacists and their patients, the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee (PSNC) recently issued a patient leaflet and poster where patients are asked to return to a pharmacy for aTIV: <https://psnc.org.uk/our-news/patient-leaflet-when-patients-are-asked-to-return-to-the-pharmacy-for-ativ/>

Public Health England (PHE) has also published a leaflet that will support your communication with patients aged 65 years and over, which is available to download at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-vaccination-for-people-aged-65-and-older>

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Watson". The signature is written in a cursive style.

**Regional Director
NHS England**

CC: CCG Accountable Officers

Annex

NHS England and Public Health England recommend that it is generally better to wait to have the flu jab that is most effective for the relevant age group, even if that means having the jab slightly later in the year than in previous years. NHS England issued a Q&A about staged delivery to practices and pharmacies in March 2018 confirming this and advising them to begin plans for vaccination clinics to be organised based on this schedule.

GP practices and pharmacies that ordered before the stated April deadlines should have received their own delivery schedule in August 2018. Further guidance was issued in August¹ and September 2018².

¹ Letter and guidance for GPs and Community Pharmacies August 2018

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/flu-vaccination-programme-delivery-guidance-2018-19/>

² Local guidance for NHSE, CCGs, GPs and Community Pharmacies September 2018

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/local-actions-to-ensure-ativ-is-offered-to-individuals-aged-65-years-and-over/>