

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**INSTITUTE OF OBSTETRICIANS & GYNAECOLOGISTS, Royal College of Physicians in Ireland**

**FRIDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER 2009 @ 2.00PM**

### **H1N1 VACCINE FOR WOMEN WHO ARE PREGNANT OR ARE BREASTFEEDING**

H1N1 is a new type of influenza virus which causes respiratory disease. For most people, H1N1 has caused mild to moderate illness. Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding are more susceptible to a more severe illness should they become infected with H1N1.

Evidence suggests that pregnant women are four times more likely to develop serious complications or be hospitalised from H1N1 than non-pregnant women. These complications include early labour or severe pneumonia. The risk of these complications is higher after 14 weeks of pregnancy and for pregnant women who are at risk of medical complications.

It has been shown that vaccination is the best way to prevent this illness and its potential complications and confers passive immunity for up to six months for the newborn baby.

The National Immunisation Advisory Committee of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI) has recommended that the following receive the vaccine:

- All pregnant women from 14 weeks pregnant to 6 weeks after giving birth
- Pregnant women up to 14 weeks pregnant who also have one of the at-risk medical conditions
  - Long term lung disease
  - Long term heart disease
  - Long term kidney disease
  - Long term liver disease
  - Long term neurological disease
  - Diabetes
  - Morbid obesity
  - Haemoglobinopathies
  - Immunosuppression

The Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, RCPI endorses this position as does the World Health Organisation and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

There are two H1N1 vaccines licensed for use in Ireland, Pandemrix and Celvapan. While there are differences between the vaccines as to how they are manufactured and their ingredients, both have been licensed for use by the European Medicines Agency and the Irish Medicines Board. Both are considered equally safe, based on available evidence, for use in pregnancy and in the 6 weeks after delivery.

No concerns have been raised with respect to the seasonal flu vaccine in pregnancy over its many years of use. A similar safety profile with the H1N1 vaccine is anticipated.

It is generally agreed both nationally and internationally that potential complications associated with H1N1 in pregnancy far outweigh any possible risks associated with vaccination in pregnancy.

The Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, RCPI, based on available evidence, recommends vaccination in pregnancy for all after 14 weeks of pregnancy and up to 6 weeks post delivery and in certain situations (outlined above) in pregnant women less than 14 weeks pregnant.

ENDS

Notes for Editor

*The mission of The Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI) is to develop and maintain high professional standards in specialist medical practice in order to achieve optimum patient care and to promote health nationally and internationally. Through its Faculties and Committees, RCPI has responsibility for the postgraduate education and training of doctors in Ireland in twenty-five medical specialties.*

*RCPI is fully committed to playing a full and proactive part in the transformation of the health service, as evidenced by its involvement in many strategic initiatives with the Medical Council, the Health Services Executive, the Department of Health and Children, and other Irish postgraduate medical training bodies.*