

To: RCGP  
BMA  
RCOG  
RCN  
RCM  
Community Practitioners' and Health Visitors' Association  
Royal Pharmaceutical Society  
Company Chemists' Association  
National Pharmacy Association

cc: SHA Flu Leads  
SHA Winter Leads

25 November 2011

Gateway reference no: 16950

Dear colleagues

Thank you for your support for the flu vaccination programme so far this year. Following letters from the Chief Medical Officer, Chief Pharmaceutical Officer and Chief Nursing Officer earlier in the year, I am writing on their behalf to seek your further assistance in achieving higher flu vaccination coverage, particularly in:

- all pregnant women;
- people aged under 65 years in the clinical risk groups; and
- frontline healthcare workers.

Although good progress has been made among healthcare workers compared to last year, current data show that vaccine uptake levels are similar to the same time last year (the latest data can be found at <http://immunisation.dh.gov.uk/>). We may not reach the aspiration of 60% uptake in the clinical risk groups, and there is also room to improve uptake in pregnant women.

We don't know how serious flu will be this winter. But we do know that improving flu vaccine uptake will ensure that more vulnerable people are protected.

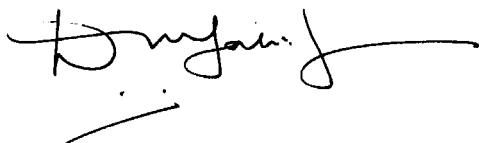
I would appreciate your help in conveying the following messages to your members:

- All midwives, maternity nurses, obstetricians and other professionals working with maternity services are asked to take every opportunity to remind pregnant women that they're recommended to have the vaccine. Community pharmacists who dispense medicines for pregnant women should use that opportunity to remind them to get vaccinated. Where a pregnant woman is vaccinated in a setting other than their GP practice professionals are reminded to please ensure the data is passed back to the patient's GP.

- The vaccination of the clinical risk groups is very important – these groups are at much greater risk of severe disease or death if they catch flu. GP practice staff are asked to review the uptake levels achieved so far, and implement measures to improve uptake in these clinical risk groups. Community pharmacists who dispense repeat prescriptions for the clinical at-risk groups should encourage them to be vaccinated.
- All frontline healthcare workers are reminded that protecting themselves with the flu vaccine benefits the individual and reduces the risk of transmitting the virus to vulnerable patients and their colleagues.
- GPs are reminded to keep unused stocks of flu vaccines in case there is a late surge in demand as occurred last year.
- GPs are asked to ensure they are proactively using a call and recall system to invite eligible patients to be vaccinated.
- Pharmacists commissioned to provide an NHS flu vaccination service, are asked to ensure that vaccine uptake data is shared with their PCT, and every effort is made to pass the information back to the patient's GP to complete the patient's medical records. Ideally, community pharmacists offering seasonal flu vaccination through a non-NHS service should send the information to a patient's GP.

Thank you for your continued support for the flu vaccination programme.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D M Salisbury', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Professor D M SALISBURY CB**  
FRCP FRCPCH FFPH  
Director of Immunisation