Training Stressed to Reduce Vaccine Errors

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EXPERT ANALYSIS FROM THE NATIONAL IMMUNIZATION CONFERENCE

ATLANTA — The problem of how to reduce vaccine-related errors was raised during a lively question-and-answer session at the conference, which was sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The panelists—Dr. Jyabode Akinsanya-Beysoylov, Dr. William Atkinson, Dr. Andrew Kroger, and Donna Weaver, R.N., all of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases—fielded a variety of vaccine-related questions from the audience.

One audience member reported that, in the last year, the number of vaccine errors she has seen has gone up fourfold, and there is no system to capture them. Without capturing the data, she added, it is difficult to make the case to manufacturers for label changes.

“Point well taken,” Dr. Atkinson replied. The Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System is not built to capture administration errors, he noted. “We just don’t have the kind of epidemiologic analysis we’d like to have.”

Ms. Weaver emphasized the importance of training and orientation for each new person and each time there is a new vaccine.

Vaccines For Infants and Toddlers—For Preventers’ “infant” is to be administered at 2, 4, and 12-15 months of age.

Vaccine Schedule for Unvaccinated Children 27 Months of Age—For children who are being vaccinated in the catch-up schedule and have not received Preventer’s “Infant Diphtheria and Pertussis Vaccines” by 48 months of age, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends the following:

- Diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis vaccine (DTaP) should be administered at 2, 4, and 6 months of age.
- Tetanus and pertussis vaccine (Tdap) should be administered at 11-12 months of age.
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The other topics discussed included:

- Confusing the diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis (DTaP) vaccine for children and the tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccine for adolescents and adults.

Practices continue to make this mistake, one audience member reported. Dr. Akinsanya-Beysolov advised storing each vaccine on a different shelf. Label each shelf with the name of the vaccine and the age of the patient “in big, big, neon letters.” She also echoed Ms. Weaver’s remarks about the importance of adequate training.

More to come on pertussis, Tdap. The pertussis work group has started meeting again after taking about a year off, Dr. Atkinson reported, and he predicted a flurry of information “emerging from their discussions.” Another issue he expects the group to address is the use of Tdap in patients 65 and older.

An audience member asked if the CDC planned to refine its guidance regarding Tdap during pregnancy. It might. ACIP’s recommendation to defer the vaccine until after pregnancy is based on data from 1945, Dr. Kroger said.

“I am concerned that we use Tdap in pregnant women because there is no evidence that the vaccine is safe or efficacious,” one audience member said.

Dr. Atkinson explained that warning would be removed, and that it had been “a real distraction.” Compounding the concerns, noted an audience member, is that various professional groups issue “countermessages.”

Disclosures: None of the panelists reported any conflicts of interest.