Patient Recall of Td Booster History Is Reliable

BY MIRIAM E. TUCKER  Senior Writer

Baltimore — In settings with good access to care and high immunization rates, asking patients if they’ve received a tetanus booster in the last 10 years is a fairly accurate way to determine if they need one, Dr. C. Mural Murad of Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minn., and his associates said in a poster presentation at a conference on vaccine research sponsored by the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases.

Although previous studies have demonstrated poor accuracy of patients’ recall of their last Td booster, this has not been evaluated previously in settings where immunization rates are high and good documentation is available. In this study, 572 patients of an employee health care clinic of a large health care organization were asked whether they had a Td booster in the last 10 years. Of those, 65.6% were able to answer either “yes” or “no.” Comparison of their responses with the charts yielded high sensitivity (92.4%) and specificity (26.5%). Accuracy of recall did not differ by age or gender, Dr. Murad and his associates reported.

The results from this study patient population are likely generalizable to those of other working-age adults of similar education level. Since the results rely in significant part on human memory of a rare event—a once-every-10-years shot—they probably reflect useful information. The general characteristics of our population may extend to similar primary care settings in which educational levels are generally higher than those of the U.S. population.

The advantage to conducting this study at the Mayo Clinic is that the maturation keeps exceptionally good electronic immunization records of all employees, he noted. “In addition, we believe that our results are generalizable to the newer form of the vaccine, Typhim Vi, which is an excellent vaccine for the prevention of Typhoid fever.”

The vaccine provides protection against the risk of infection related to Salmonella typhi or other bacteria that cause enteric disease. Typhim Vi vaccine is not indicated for routine immunization of individuals in the United States. It is not indicated for children younger than 2 years of age.

In anticipation of the shortage, Merck is making a new product available in the United States, Dr. Murad said, probably reflect useful information. In the past, the availability of Td booster vaccine had been somewhat limited, but the current product is being made available in the United States.

For more information, contact Merck & Co., Inc., Rahway, N.J., or visit their website at www.merck.com.

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ProQuadrac Supply Shortage Could Last Until 2008

A projected shortage of the quadrivalent inactivated meningococcal polysaccharide vaccine means that children who require immunization for these diseases will need to get two shots instead of the single combination vaccine until supplies of the latter are replenished, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The quadrivalent vaccine (ProQuad) shortage is expected to begin in July, although actual timing will depend on market demand, and last at least through the end of 2007 (MMWR 2007 May 11;56:435).

Attributing the shortfall to lower-than-expected demands of varicella zoster virus (VZV) in its recent batch of bulk vaccine, manufacturer Merck & Co. notified the CDC earlier this year of its intent to use its available supply of VZV in the production of its varicella-only vaccine (Varivax) and its zoster vaccine (Zostavax) and to temporarily halt the production of ProQuad.

In anticipation of the shortage, Merck is requesting that physicians begin transitioning from the quadrivalent vaccine to the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine (MMR II) and the varicella vaccine. The company expects to have adequate supplies of both of the latter vaccines to fully implement the recommended immunization schedules, according to the notice.

This will allow for continued use of varicella vaccine for all age groups, including the routine two-dose schedule for children aged 12-15 months and 4-6 years, catch-up vaccination with the second dose for children on or before the second birthday who received only 1 dose, and vaccination with two doses for other children, adolescents, and adults without evidence of immunity,” the notice said. The agency remains confident that a unique supply will meet the demands for Flagship brand products.

—Diana Mahoney

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