Publications and events

Public health

Special journal issue on vaccine hesitancy
In a special issue of the journal Vaccine that was guest-edited by WHO, experts review the role of vaccine hesitancy in limiting vaccine coverage and explore strategies to address it. Vaccine hesitancy refers to delay in acceptance or refusal of safe vaccines despite availability of vaccination services. Globally, one in five children still do not receive routine life-saving immunizations, and an estimated 1.5 million children still die each year of diseases that could be prevented by vaccines that already exist.

Vaccine hesitancy can be caused by many different factors, such as negative beliefs, misinformation, mistrust in health care systems, the role of influential leaders, costs, geographic barriers and concerns about vaccine safety. It is a complex, rapidly changing global problem that occurs in many different settings. The authors note there is no “magic bullet”; tailored strategies and effective communication are key to improving vaccine acceptance.

► WHO News release, 20 August 2015.

First-ever report on global health service coverage
Geneva – WHO and the World Bank Group have jointly published the first global monitoring report on health coverage. The report, titled Tracking universal health coverage, looked at 37 low- and middle-income countries in 2013. It found that 400 million people did not have access to essential health services and 6% of people were tipped into extreme poverty ($1.25/day) because of health spending. This percentage rises to 17% if poverty is defined as living on US$ 2 per day. Across the 37 countries, a median of 1.8% of the population experienced catastrophic health expenditures amounting to more than a quarter of total household spend.

The report further shows that many of the world’s most disadvantaged people are missing out on at least one of the most basic services: family planning, antenatal care, skilled birth attendance, child immunization, antiretroviral therapy, tuberculosis treatment, and/or access to clean water and sanitation.

Action is needed in the post-2015 development era to ensure that the world’s poor are not left behind. WHO and the World Bank Group recommend that countries should aim to achieve a minimum of 80% population coverage of essential health services, and that everyone everywhere should be protected from catastrophic and impoverishing health payments.

Meningitis C vaccine needed
Geneva – Four international organizations have warned that Africa is at risk of a large meningitis outbreak, and that an acute shortage of meningitis C-containing vaccine threatens to severely limit the world’s ability to minimize the number of people affected.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and WHO – which together constitute the International Coordinating Group for Vaccine Provision for Epidemic Meningitis Control (ICG) – have called on manufacturers to step up meningitis C vaccine production by 5 million doses before the start of the next meningitis season in January 2016.

While substantial progress has been made in recent years in protecting Africa from other main sub-types of meningitis with, for example, the introduction of the MenAfrVac vaccine against meningitis A in 2010, much work needs to be done to protect the African meningitis belt from meningitis C outbreaks.


WHO matters

WHO response to the Ebola interim assessment panel report

Geneva – WHO has welcomed the final report of the interim panel that reviewed the Organization’s response to the Ebola outbreak. The panel provided recommendations in three areas: the International Health Regulations, WHO’s health emergency response capacity and WHO’s role in and cooperation with the wider health and humanitarian systems.

WHO has provided updates on its progress in moving forward in all three areas. Improved ways of working will be incorporated into the ongoing response to end the Ebola outbreak.

► WHO Statement, 7 July 2015.

Updated invitations for WHO prequalification

Geneva – The WHO Prequalification Team (PQT), in collaboration with relevant organizations and programmes, has published three updated invitations for expression of interest (EOI) for pre-qualification of medicines. Updated EOIs were posted during July and August 2015 for medicines to treat neglected tropical diseases, influenza-specific antiviral medicines and anti-tuberculosis medicines.

A combined list of medicines currently invited for prequalification, together with the number of finished products already prequalified and under assessment, is also available on the PQT website.


Upcoming events

Reminder – Joint WHO-UNICEF-UNFPA meeting with manufacturers

The 2015 joint WHO-UNICEF-UNFPA meeting with pharmaceutical and diagnostics manufacturers and suppliers will be held in Copenhagen on 23-26 November 2015. Registration is now open.

► http://apps.who.int/prequal/trainingresources/Meeting_Manufacturers2015.htm