



**30 September 2009**

## **General practice taking the lead in swine flu vaccination roll out**

General practice will lead the charge against a swine flu (Influenza H1N1) resurgence in Australia with the roll out of the vaccination program beginning today.

General practices around the country have been issued with the first round of Panvax, which is not available on the private market, to begin vaccinations. The first to be vaccinated will be health care workers, pregnant women, Indigenous Australians and those with underlying medical conditions.

Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) Chair Dr Emil Djakic said general practice was the ideal place to run a community vaccination program.

"General practice bore the brunt of swine flu when it hit Australia, because people go to their General Practitioner (GP) when they have the flu. It makes sense for people to see their GP for preventive measures like vaccination programs," he said.

Dr Djakic, a Tasmanian GP, said practices will make their own decisions about how to disseminate the vaccine, but they were encouraged to set up flu clinics.

"Patients in the 'vulnerable group' category may, if identifiable, be contacted by clinics, but anyone who is concerned they are at risk should contact their general practice and find out how to access the vaccine. Panvax will be available to patients who request it," he said.

Dr Djakic said the vaccine was based on, and similar to, the seasonal flu vaccine which CSL had developed for the Australian community for about 40 years.

"This vaccination is safe, and what's more, it will save lives. While Australia's swine flu cases appear to be decreasing, we know from the Northern Hemisphere experience that swine flu is not just a winter illness. We are still in the midst of pandemic," he said.

Influenza H1N1 has also affected younger people – the average age of deaths associated with swine flu is 56 years, compared with 83 years for seasonal flu.

General practice networks around the country, of which AGPN is the national peak body, will support GPs to deliver the vaccine by providing advice on setting up flu clinics and use of multi dose vials, including posters for practice rooms and written support.

The Network provided personal protective equipment training and pandemic planning management support early in Australia's response to the pandemic.

"The Networks' relationships with GPs will be invaluable to ensuring the public are protected against this influenza so Australians are not subjected to another wave this nasty flu," Dr Djakic said.

**For media interviews please phone AGPN Communications Manager Frith Rayner on 02 6228 0819 or 0402 267 190**