Reviewer's report

Title: Central European Vaccination Advisory Group (CEVAG) guidance statement on recommendations for influenza vaccination in children

Version: 1 Date: 9 February 2010

Reviewer: Kristine Macartney

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions:
None

Minor Essential Revisions:
1. Throughout the manuscript please define what age "children" CEVAG is recommending universal influenza immunisation of - its clear that this is from 6 months of age, but to what upper age? (eg if it is up to and including 18 years then please state explicitly throughout)
2. In Table 2, please state above, and also the requirement for annual immunisation could be made more obvious. Also comment on method of vaccine delivery is only limited to infants - what about delivery for older children?
3. Line 3 in background, pg 3: should not say mortality rates, just mortality as these are not rates
4. Please update strategies for the future to briefly reflect that a pandemic from the 2009 H1N1 strain has occurred (this now seems quite out of date otherwise)
5. Page 8: second paragraph should state that no trials of TRIVALENT split or subunit vaccines in infants and children have been conducted in the EU - as pandemic vaccine trials in young children have taken place.
6. pg 4, last para: The intended meaning of this sentence is unclear: "It has been shown that only 28% of children with laboratory-confirmed influenza are correctly diagnosed [13].", please amend
7. pg 5. Last paragraph is important for putting current thinking on this policy in the context, but is is "buried" in large section. I would prefer to see this highlighted earlier, or put with section on existing recommendations.
8. pg 8 last para - expression "reverted back" does not appear accurate, could be changed. Also this paragraph repeats what is said in 2rd para on pg 10 (and is expressed more accurately on page 10) - consider re-working this part of manuscript.

Discretionary Revisions
1. Table 2: I suggest stating commonly reported side effects from TIV, eg injection site reactions, systemic symptoms. ie what can reasonably be expected
following immunisation.

2. Suggest consistently stating difference between USA and Canadian recommendations for annual influenza vaccine for children, eg in background it says "universal influenza vaccination in infants from the age of 6 months is current practice in the USA and Canada" - this is ambiguous as infants are < 12 months of age, but this is not upper age limit for either country's recommendation.

3. Page 4, second paragraph - I suggest that more serious complications are pneumonia, secondary bacterial infection, sepsis, (rather than example of OM)

4. pg 9 para 2. The authors only quote one effectiveness study of TIV in children, however, there have been a number of efficacy studies, and subsequent reviews with meta-analyses and a cochrane review (eg Manzoli et al, Smith et al, Negri et al). In the RCTs the number of subjects aged < 24 months was limited, and some have concluded that efficacy in these youngest of children is less well demonstrated. I suggest this should be discussed, even briefly, and even if it does not impact upon the final recommendations.

5. The evidence for herd immunity from immunising children has been reviewed by Jordan et al, Vaccine, and would be a valuable reference to include.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'