Reviewer's report

Title: An Audit of Influenza and Pneumococcal Vaccination in Rheumatology Outpatients

Version: 2 Date: 11 April 2007

Reviewer: Jennifer Hamilton

Reviewer's report:

General
This audit looks at local uptake of influenza and pneumococcal vaccination in rheumatology patients attending a district general hospital. Although there is very little published as papers and letters in mainstream journals at the annual meeting of the British Society for Rheumatology there are often a number of abstracts looking at this area all of which conclude as the authors do here that uptake of vaccination could be better. We published a follow up in abstract form to our 2002 study (Rheumatology 2005;44(suppl 1)abs 98 and have had a letter accepted for publication in Rheumatology I looking at whether interventions on the part of secondary care can influence uptake of both influenza and pneumococcal vaccination in vulnerable rheumatology patients.

Overall the quality of written English is acceptable but the article could be condensed into fewer words

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

I feel that before accepting this paper the conclusion should be revised to include more in the way of specific suggestions as to how uptake of vaccination can be improved. With specific reference to the study patients could the information given to the patients be improved in any way?, How can they influence GPs-they mention sending out reminders to primary care but will this be a general reminder or contain specific patient information? They mention that there is a trend to fewer vaccinations in patients on immunosuppressive agents - could it be that GPs are confused as to whether it is ok to vaccinate rheumatology patients on immunosuppressives?

One of the aims of the study was to determine reasons for refusal of vaccination although only 4 patients refused there is no information provided about why they refused.

Could recall bias be an influencing factor in terms of whether patients had been offered vaccination or not.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
Second line in background should read streptococcus pneumoniae

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
No mention is made in the background as to why it is important to vaccinate rheumatology patients and no mention is made of the susceptibility to pneumococcal infection in those patients on treatment with biologics

No definition is given in the text for immunosuppressive DMARDs although it is provided later in the table

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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