European Immunization Week (EIW) 24–30 April 2017 is celebrated across the European Region every April. It aims to raise awareness of the importance of immunisation for people’s health and well-being. The theme this year is “Vaccines work” and will focus on the need for and benefits of immunisation at every stage in life. Activities will focus on the progress and challenges in eliminating measles and rubella in the Region. Many adolescents, adults and individuals at particular risk are not sufficiently aware of the diseases that threaten their health and the vaccinations they need to ensure continuing protection. Susceptibility to vaccine-preventable diseases among healthcare workers is of particular concern as it can lead to the spread of infection among patients.

This focus on every stage of life is of particular note as measles is spreading across Europe wherever immunisation coverage has dropped. The largest outbreaks are being seen in Italy and Romania. In the first month of this year, Italy reported more than 200 cases. Romania has reported more than 3,400 cases and 17 deaths since January 2016. In the last year, the measles cases confirmed in Wales have mainly been in older adolescents and young adults with many linked to music festivals and other large public events.

Individuals, of any age, who have not received two doses of the MMR vaccine, or those who are unsure, should speak to their GP practice. However those born before 1970 are likely to have had measles and be immune. It’s never too late to have the vaccine and measles can still be serious in adults. The travel consultation provides practitioners with a valuable opportunity to ensure individuals are protected against measles before travel.

We are looking forward to celebrating the 14th Welsh Immunisation Conference on the 4th May, at the SWALEC stadium in Cardiff, this event supports EIW. The conference is now fully booked but next month’s bulletin will report on the conference highlights.

Protecting more older people in Wales from Shingles
The WHC (2017)17 published on the 7th April extends the catch up programme to include people aged 77. Any individual, who has become eligible for vaccination but is unvaccinated, remains eligible until the day before their 80th birthday. Further information is available on the shingles vaccination 2017–18 programme page.

Reporting any remaining unused Fluenz® Tetra
All UK Fluenz® Tetra vaccine stock has now expired for the 2016/17 flu season and any remaining stock should be disposed of according to local policy. Unvaccinated
children who are in a risk group for flu can still be offered inactivated flu vaccine if this is available locally.

It is important to remember that any expired Fluenz® Tetra vaccine held locally is recorded on ImmForm, on the Stock Incident page. This is to ensure that all stock is accounted for and supports efforts across the system to reduce the level of vaccine which may go unused at the end of the season. Please ensure that you select the appropriate reason (i.e. ‘expired before use’ or ‘cold chain failure’) when recording the disposal of any stock. All centrally supplied vaccines discarded for any reason should also be recorded on the ImmForm stock incident form in the same way.

MMR vaccines
To remind readers, there are two MMR vaccines supplied centrally, Priorix and MMRvaxPro, and they are interchangeable in the MMR vaccination schedule. Whereas Priorix contains no gelatine, MMRvaxPRO contains gelatine of porcine origin. Orders for Priorix are currently restricted to 6 packs per order per week, in order to balance central stocks. The alternative vaccine, MMRvaxPro, remains available to order without restriction. There is a vaccine and porcine gelatine information leaflet available to order from hplibrararay@wales.nhs.uk or telephone 08456 064050.

Primary infant vaccine
Due to delivery delays, ordering for Pediacel remains restricted. The alternative vaccine Infanrix IPV Hib is available to order with no restriction on volume. Where possible and if local stock holding allows, it is preferable that the same DTaP/IPV-Hib containing vaccine be used for all three doses of the primary course. However, vaccination should never be delayed because the vaccine used for previous doses is not known or unavailable.

Vaccines not procured and supplied centrally
The Public Health England (PHE) Vaccine Update issue 260 March 2017 provides an update on the supply situation for vaccines purchased direct from the manufacturers (e.g. for travel and risk groups). If a vaccine is required for a risk patient it should be purchased directly from the manufacturer.

The supply situation for these vaccines is based on manufacturers’ disclosure to the Department of Health and PHE. The supply situation is dynamic and shortages from one supplier combined with increased demand due to outbreaks (e.g. hepatitis A clusters among men who have sex with men (MSM)) may put additional pressures on other manufacturers.

Learning how New Zealand healthcare workers are helping to beat flu
Read about Nicola Meredith’s Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Travelling Fellowship Award trip to New Zealand.

2017 Beat Flu Awards video
A short video showcasing the recent 2017 Beat Flu awards ceremony now available.

The Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme team would like to wish everyone a very happy Easter

This e-bulletin is compiled by the Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme (VPDP) Public Health Wales and distributed monthly. It is designed to be read on screen, with clickable links to further information online. If you are currently reading a hard copy, an online version can be found on the NHS Wales intranet at http://howis.wales.nhs.uk/immunisation. Comments would be welcomed at publichealthwales.vaccines@wales.nhs.uk