Vaccine coverage estimate for the first urgent catch-up meningococcal ACWY (MenACWY) immunisation programme for England, updated to the end of March 2016

National vaccine coverage for the first cohort offered MenACWY vaccine as part of an urgent catch-up programme from August 2015 (those born 1 September 1996 to 31 August 1997) evaluated at the end of March 2016 was 35.2%. This cohort remain eligible for vaccination until the age of 25.

Introduction

MenACWY immunisation was added to the national immunisation programme in August 2015 following advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) in response to the rising number of meningococcal W (MenW) cases.

The objective of the MenACWY immunisation programme is to immunise all teenagers in school years 9 to 13 before they complete academic year 13. This is being met through replacing the routine adolescent MenC booster given in years 9 or 10 with the MenACWY vaccine since September 2015, and through a series of catch-up campaigns targeting older teenagers. These include, an urgent general practice (GP) based MenACWY vaccination catch-up campaign from August 2015, targeting all those in the 2014/15 school year 13.

There will be further catch-up campaigns in 2016 and 2017 for those currently aged 15 to 18 who will not have been offered MenACWY vaccination. Additionally, MenACWY is offered to older students aged up to 25 who are in university as part of the existing time-limited ‘freshers’ programme.

This report updates the previous estimate of national vaccination coverage in the 2014/15 year 13 cohort, assessed to 31 January 2016 and based on data from three of four GP IT suppliers [1], with more complete data from all GP IT suppliers to 31 March 2016.

Methods

In order to assess vaccine coverage of this newly implemented immunisation programme PHE has put in place a temporary sentinel surveillance system. This uses GP practice level MenACWY vaccine coverage data automatically uploaded via participating GP IT suppliers to the ImmForm* website on a monthly basis. Cumulative monthly data are then validated and analysed by PHE to check data completeness, identify and query any anomalous results and describe epidemiological trends.

Cumulative monthly MenACWY vaccine coverage data (from September 2015 to March 2016) were collected for the target birth cohort using the following definitions:

- **Denominator:** the number of patients registered in a GP practice aged 17-18 years on 1 August 2015 (born between 01/09/1996 and 31/08/1997);
- **Numerator:** the number of patients in the denominator who have received a MenACWY vaccine between 1 August 2015 and 31 March 2016.

Vaccine coverage is calculated as the total number of patients who have received the vaccination (numerators) as a percentage of the number of patients registered (denominator).

* ImmForm is the system used by Public Health England to record vaccine coverage data for some immunisation programmes and to provide vaccine ordering facilities for the NHS.
Participation and data quality

For this urgent MenACWY catch-up programme, vaccination was offered to individuals in the target population from August 2015 through to the end of March 2016. Many individuals in this cohort will have changed their GP registration as they move to university or college, military establishment, etc. during this period. For this reason the denominators and numerators for individual GP practices will fluctuate between monthly data extractions, limiting the month on month comparability for any given geography. As a result, local MenACWY coverage estimate cannot be confidently estimated and are not provided.

Seven monthly collections (September 2015 to March 2016) of MenACWY vaccine coverage data were uploaded. Only one GP IT supplier, representing around 50% of all English GP practices, provided data consistently for all uploads since the beginning of the evaluation period (September 2015). However, all four GP IT suppliers provided information for cumulative coverage estimates to the end of March 2016.

Results

National cumulative MenACWY vaccine coverage at the end of March 2016 for the urgent catch-up cohort in England is 35.2%.

Monthly cumulative coverage reported by the one GP IT supplier that provided data consistently through the evaluation period increased from 28.9% at the end of September to 35.5% at the end of March 2016. This suggests that 81% of all vaccinations were given during August and September 2015.

Discussion

The announcement of the urgent catch-up programme was made in June 2016, MenACWY vaccine became available for GP practices to order in July, and the call and recall of the target cohort of adolescents started in August. The aim of the programme was to vaccinate as many of this cohort as possible before the start of the 2015/16 academic year and these data indicate that most vaccinations were given prior to October 2015.

The relatively low coverage in the target group highlights the challenges of a GP-delivered vaccination programme in this age group, confirming findings from a previous HPV catch-up vaccination programme [2]. Low MenACWY coverage may be exacerbated by a significant number of the target individuals in this age group attending university or other educational organisations away from their home address, which may lead to a temporary change in GP, making both invitation to the vaccination programme and monitoring more complex.

In the 2016/17 financial year, the GP delivered MenACWY programme again targets 17 and 18 years olds (born between 01/09/1997-31/08/1998, school year 13) who are leaving school in summer 2016. However, young adults in the first urgent catch-up cohort who have not yet been vaccinated are still able to obtain MenACWY vaccination from their GP up to the age of 25, and coverage in this cohort will continue to be monitored alongside the new eligible school year 13 cohort.

Coverage estimates for the school-based routine and catch-up MenACWY programmes delivered in the 2015/16 academic year will be captured in an annual survey in September 2016 and are expected to be published in late 2016.

Further information

Further information relating to the implementation of this vaccination programme is available from the PHE website document collection, Meninccoccal ACWY (MenACWY) vaccination programme.

References
