



Pharmacy Influenza Vaccination Service Review

2017/18 will be the seventh season that Irish community pharmacists have been involved in the HSE Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Campaign. In this article, Pamela Logan, Director of Pharmacy Services, IPU, reviews the pharmacy influenza vaccination service and looks at other vaccinations suitable for community pharmacy provision.

Seasonal influenza has to be taken seriously. Each year, approximately 10% of Europe's population is infected and influenza-related complications cause hundreds of thousands of hospitalisations across Europe. Older people, younger children and those with chronic conditions suffer the most, but everyone is at risk of developing serious complications – which include pneumonia, myocarditis and encephalitis – that may result in death.

Flu Vaccination in Irish community pharmacies

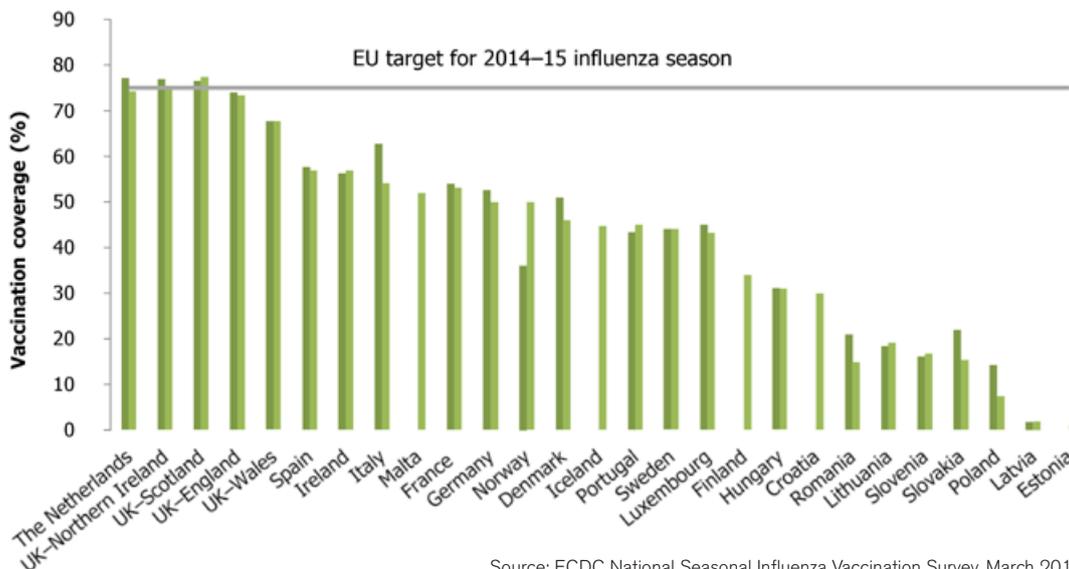
In Ireland, the pharmacy influenza vaccination service continues to grow. As shown in Table 1, the number of patients vaccinated in community pharmacy continues to increase year on year, with the 2016/17 season seeing a total of 78,935 vaccinated across the 762 pharmacies which provided the service. This is an increase of 26% on the previous season. Pharmacy flu vaccination now accounts for around 10% of the total flu vaccinations.



Figure 1: Flu Vaccinations in Community Pharmacies 2011 – 2017

Season	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017
No. of flu vaccinations	9,125	18,358	40,991	51,227	62,514	78,935

Figure 2: Seasonal Influenza vaccination coverage rates in older age groups in EU/EEA Member States, 2011 – 12 and 2012 – 13 influenza seasons

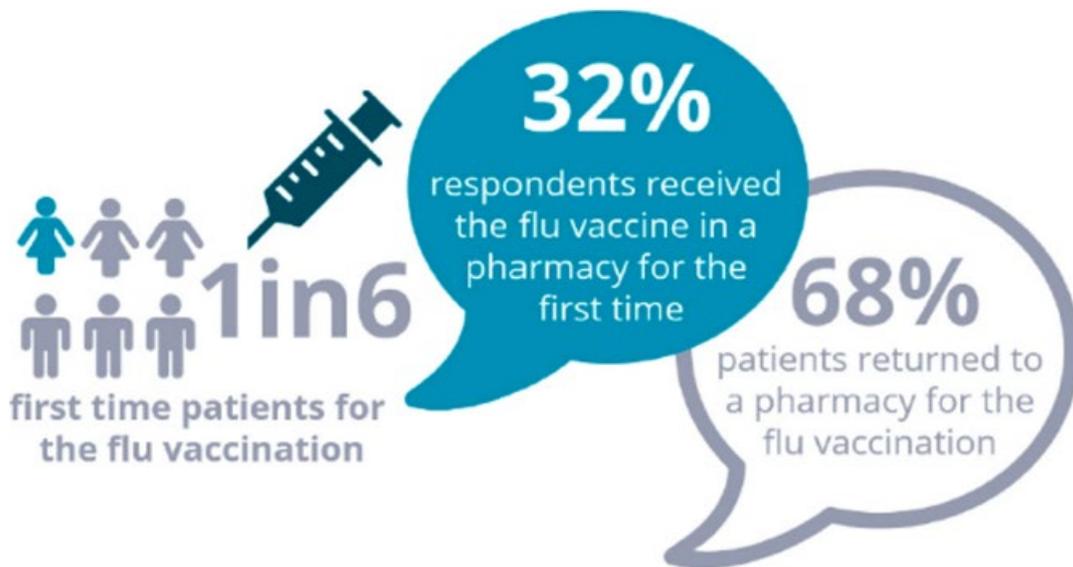


Source: ECDC National Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Survey, March 2014

- 84% of respondents said they had received the flu vaccination before. Overall, almost a third indicated it was their first time receiving the flu vaccine in a pharmacy.
- 19 out of every 20 respondents said they were very satisfied with the amount of information received at the time of vaccination.
- 99% said that they would be likely to go to the pharmacist for their flu vaccination again.
- Patient satisfaction with the pharmacy-delivered flu vaccination service is high; 79% of respondents rated their overall satisfaction as 10 out of 10; 93% rated overall satisfaction as 9 or 10 out of 10; 99% of respondents rated their overall satisfaction as either 8, 9 or 10 out of 10.

Flu vaccination coverage in the EU

In 2009, the EU Council recommended that Member States should reach a vaccination coverage rate of 75% by 2014/15 for persons aged 65 years and older, people with chronic medical conditions, pregnant women and young children, and, also, that vaccination coverage among healthcare workers should be improved. Nevertheless, only the Netherlands and the UK have achieved the 75% target for vaccination in older people (Figure 2). Very few Member States record vaccination coverage rates for people with chronic conditions.



Patient feedback on pharmacy vaccination

In March 2016, the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (PSI) published the results of a survey on patient feedback about the flu vaccination service provided in community pharmacies.





Patient motivation to attend pharmacy for flu vaccination



- Reasons for attending a pharmacy for the flu vaccination were convenience of access, efficiency (longer opening hours, no need for appointments etc.), trust in pharmacist and cost. On a scale of 0 to 10, 74% of patients rated trust in the pharmacist as 9 or 10 (most important factor) for attending a pharmacy for the vaccination.

Respondents were also asked their opinions on having other vaccines and services available from a community pharmacy. Specific examples were provided and there was generally positive response to the suggestion of expanding the range of health services and vaccinations provided by a pharmacist.

Pharmacy vaccination in nursing homes

In January 2017, the IPU wrote to the Minister for Health proposing that pharmacists should be facilitated in vaccinating patients in

nursing homes or other residential care settings, especially against seasonal influenza. At that time, influenza hospitalisations and outbreaks in residential care facilities were at high levels. Given the current shortage of GPs and its predicted worsening in the future, steps must be taken to ensure that all patients in residential care facilities have ready access to a healthcare professional who can provide appropriate and timely vaccinations. The IPU believes that this could and should be their local community pharmacist. Improving access to and uptake of vaccination would go some way towards assisting in reducing demand on A&E and hospital services.

Pneumococcal and shingles

Last season, pharmacists were enabled to vaccinate against pneumococcal disease and shingles. Unfortunately, the uptake levels were very low, at 164 and 64 respectively. The main reason for low uptake was that the HSE does

not remunerate pharmacies for these vaccinations. In a meeting with the Minister last year and a follow-up letter in July this year, the IPU requested that pneumococcal vaccination in pharmacies be included in the HSE national programme.

Other vaccinations

In December last year and again in April this year, a proposal was sent to the Minister to further expand the range of vaccines that pharmacists are permitted to supply and administer. The proposal considered all vaccines within the guidelines produced by the National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC) and made recommendations as to the suitability of certain selected vaccines for a Pharmacy Vaccination Service.

Conclusion

The ability to monitor vaccination coverage is a key component of any vaccination programme. In order to identify gaps and

weaknesses, all Member States need to reconsider their approach in order to collect more comprehensive and accurate information on vaccination coverage for all of those population groups that are targeted for seasonal influenza vaccination, in order to enable public health organisations to track their progress and identify obstacles to achieving national and EU targets. The HSE vaccination portal, which pharmacists use to record all vaccines administered, could form the basis of such a system and supports the appropriateness of pharmacies as a location for receiving vaccinations.

There is still great potential for the pharmacy vaccination service to grow. The HSE estimates that, between older people and at-risk people, over one million people should be vaccinated in Ireland. As the population ages and chronic disease rates keep increasing, this cohort will continue to grow. Meanwhile, we still await a response from the Department of Health to the various proposals to the Minister which are detailed above.

“There is still great potential for the pharmacy vaccination service to grow. The HSE estimates that, between older people and at-risk people, over one million people should be vaccinated in Ireland.”