

RCN position on HCSWs administering specific vaccinations, given as part of the routine national schedule.

The following relates to the addition of the shingles vaccine for older adults to be given alongside the current adult immunisations for influenza and pneumococcal disease.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The RCN considers that in the absence of mandatory regulation for Health Care Support Workers (HCSWs) it is important to clearly define the role and boundaries of the HCSW such as Health Care Assistants and Assistant Practitioners that may be involved in immunisation.
- 1.2 This paper sets out the RCN's position and guiding principles with regard to HCSWs administering influenza, pneumococcal and shingles vaccines to adults.
- 1.3 It provides health care staff and organisations with information to support an informed decision about the appropriateness or otherwise of delegating a particular immunisation role to an unregistered practitioner such as a HCSW. It does not intend to present a 'definitive' model for all situations but rather the principles to be followed where HCSWs are involved in supporting specific vaccination programmes.

2. Changes to the national immunisation programme

- 2.1 The immunisation programme in the UK is constantly evolving and developing as research identifies better use of the vaccines currently available or as new vaccines become available. The process of introducing vaccination in the UK is informed by the Joint Committee of Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).
- 2.2 In 2013 a vaccine for Shingles was introduced to the routine national immunisation schedule for 70 year old adults with a planned catch up programme for those up to the age of 79 years.
- 2.3 The RCN recognises that nursing teams are key to the safe and effective administration of large numbers of vaccinations to those who need them. The overriding principle is that anyone involved needs to be suitably competent and have the knowledge as well as skills to ensure patient safety and public trust in immunisation are maintained.

3. The RCN position

- 3.1 The RCN supports the role of the HCSW in administering influenza, pneumococcal and shingles vaccinations to adults providing they are appropriately trained and have the support of a registered health care professional and their employer.**

- 3.2 The shingles vaccine is offered to older adults alongside the influenza and pneumococcal vaccinations that are already given by HCSWs in many settings.
- 3.3 It would not in the best interest of the patient for them to be passed to a different health professional for administration of the shingles vaccine, as this could raise unnecessary concerns about the vaccine or the HCSW's competence.
- 3.4 The criteria defined below for delegation must be met where HCSWs are involved in administering the influenza, pneumococcal or shingles vaccine.**

The RCN standards for delegation (RCN 2011) can be accessed on: www.rcn.org.uk/hcaaccountability. These include the questions that need to be asked before any activity is delegated to a HCSW.

- Is delegation in the best interest of the patient/client?
 - Has a risk assessment been undertaken?
 - Has the support worker been appropriately trained and assessed as competent to perform the role?
 - Does the support worker consider themselves to be competent and confident to perform the role?
 - Is adequate support and supervision available for the support worker?
 - Are robust protocols in place so that the support worker is not required to make a stand alone clinical judgement?
- 3.5 All health care professionals involved in immunisation should be able to demonstrate competence, current evidence-based knowledge and understanding of the areas listed in the *Health Protection Agency National Minimum Standards for Immunisation Training and the Core Curriculum for Immunisation Training* (HPA 2005). The standards state that all health professionals engaged in vaccination should be trained to provide accurate and up to date information about the diseases and vaccines to their patients.
- 3.6 In 2012 the Health Protection Agency (HPA 2012) produced *Minimum Training Standards and a Core Curriculum for health care support workers for administering influenza and pneumococcal vaccinations to adults*: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/362192/National_minimum_standards_and_core_curriculum_for_immunisation_training_of_healthcare_support_workers.pdf
- 3.7 In any case involving administration of a prescription only medicine (POM) an unregistered support worker may only administer under a patient specific direction (PSD) and may NOT work under a patient group direction (PGD).

For further guidance on patient specific directions the Medicines & Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has issued [FAQs on PSDs](#).

- 3.8 The RCN considers it good practice for registered nurses to be involved in the HCSW's immunisation training and for the whole team to have a clear understanding of the roles of the independent prescriber, the supervising nurse and the HCSW. The PSD [FAQ](#) states that;
'the prescriber is responsible for assessment of the patient and the decision to supply/administer the medicine(s) in question. The prescriber has a duty of care and is professionally and legally accountable for the care he/she provides. The prescriber must be satisfied that the person to whom practice is delegated has the qualifications, experience, knowledge and skills to provide the care or treatment involved.'
This is also clear within the [GMC](#) Good Medical Practice Guide and the [NMC code](#) for nurses and midwives.
- 3.9 HCSWs must not be put in a position where they have to make stand alone clinical judgment calls. The HCSW would need to be able to promptly liaise and discuss issues with a registered practitioner, who is available on site, whether they are in a clinic or hospital setting.
- 3.10 All registered professionals must adhere to their codes of conduct and delegation principles (NMC 2008) (GMC 2013) (HCPC 2008).

4. Principles to support the administration of vaccines by HCSW

- 4.1 These principles set out safe parameters to facilitate the delivery of the influenza, pneumococcal and shingles immunisation programmes for adults, while enabling nurses and HCSWs to practice safely and within acceptable and legal boundaries.
- 4.2 Patient safety is paramount. There should be both a robust framework for the education of the HCSW and clear governance procedures (see algorithm, appendix 1).
- In any case involving administration of medication, an unregistered support worker may only administer under a patient specific direction (PSD) and may NOT work under a patient group direction (PGD). Guidance on patient specific directions is available from the Medicines & Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) FAQs <http://www.mhra.gov.uk/Safetyinformation/Healthcareproviders/PSDs-frequentlyaskedquestions/index.htm>
- 4.3 ***The prescriber has a duty of care and is professionally and legally accountable for the care he/she provides, including tasks delegated to others.***

- ***The prescriber must be satisfied that the person to whom practice is delegated has the experience, knowledge and skills to provide the care or treatment involved.***
- ***The individual administering the vaccine remains accountable for their practice.***
- All those who administer vaccines must be appropriately trained in line with the minimum training standards and should be assessed as able to demonstrate competence, knowledge of the current evidence-based and understanding of the areas listed in the *Health Protection Agency, National minimum standards for immunisation training and the core curriculum for immunisation training.* (HPA 2005)

4.4 HCSWs must not be put in a position where they have to make stand alone clinical judgment calls. Consider the following questions and work through the algorithm to decide if this delegation is appropriate.

- Have all the questions to be asked prior to delegation been answered and is there evidence of the HCSW's competence in the administration of the particular vaccine to be administered?
- Is a PSD in place that has been completed by an independent prescriber?
- Is the prescriber satisfied that the person to whom the practice is delegated has the experience, knowledge and skills to provide the care?
- Has the HCSW undergone training that covers all aspects of the immunisations to be administered, as per the National minimum standards for immunisation training? (HPA 2005, HPA 2012).
 - Provide accurate and up-to-date information about the relevant diseases and vaccines to their patients
 - Consult a registered healthcare professional when further information is required for the patient's needs
 - Ensure that their practice is safe and effective
 - Give a high standard of care
 - Demonstrate competence in administration of vaccinations
 - Demonstrate competence in recognition and management of anaphylaxis and basic life support
 - Demonstrate an understanding of appropriate management of adverse reactions
 - Demonstrate an understanding of their role and its limitations
 - Understand the legal issues including; informed consent and use of Patient Specific Directions (PSDs)

- Is there a registered practitioner on site so that the HCSW can refer any queries outside their sphere of knowledge to them?
- Has the employer arranged indemnity insurance for the HCSW to perform this intervention?

For the RCN position on HCSW administering the Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine [see document](#).

References

General Medical Council 2013: *Delegation and referral* (March 2013) (Available at: http://www.gmc-uk.org/Delegation_and_referral.pdf_51449482.pdf)

General Medical Council 2013 Good medical practice. (Available at: http://www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/good_medical_practice.asp)

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Health Protection Agency (2005). *National Minimum Standards in Immunisation Training*. London: Health Protection Agency. (Available at: www.hpa.org.uk/immunisationtraining)

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Nursing and Midwifery Council 2015: *The code: Standards of conduct, performance and ethics for nurses and midwives*. (Available at: <http://www.nmc-uk.org/Publications/Standards/The-code/Introduction/>)

Royal College of Nursing (2011). *Accountability and Delegation: what you need to know*. (Available at: www.rcn.org.uk/hcaaccountability)

Royal College of Nursing 2014 *RCN position on HCSW influenza and pneumococcal immunisation*. (Available at: www.rcn.org.uk/data/assets/word_doc/0008/524933/RCN_position_on_HCSW_immunisation.docx)

ALGORITHM to CLARIFY THE PROCESS for DELEGATION OF VACCINATION to a HCSW PRESCRIBING AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR SUPPLY AND ADMINISTRATION

